

ITALIA!

Issue 131 October 2015 £4.40

www.italytravelandlife.com

HOLIDAYS PROPERTY FOOD WINE CULTURE PEOPLE

DREAMY PUGLIA

Why not soak up the hot southern sun where the property market is back on the boil?

**ESSENTIAL
LAKE GARDA**
Seven things
to see and do

48 HOURS IN VICENZA

Head out of Venice for a memorable weekend break

The rental option

Top tips for shorthold tenants

Tuscan white wines



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ANTHEM



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Welcome!



I first went to Puglia almost ten years ago. It was mid-summer and boy, was it hot... But it was also beautiful. The south of Italy has a reputation for being somewhat harsh and rugged, but the coastline is to die for and if you head inland you'll discover the picturesque *trulli*, as featured on this issue's cover. Historically Puglia

has been one of Italy's poorer regions, at least in modern times, though times are changing again. That said, it remains a region that offers property bargains for those in the know. So if you'd like a place in Italy to call your own, whether as a holiday home or a permanent residence, now is the time to buy. The market there is hotting up, and investments are plentiful. And who better than *Italia!*'s very own property expert Fleur Kinson to explore your options? She starts her analysis on page 20.

But *Italia!* isn't just about buying property in the country, of course! It's about getting there and experiencing the diversity that Italy has to offer. In this issue we explore the little-known city of Vicenza; we travel through the southeast of Sicily; we take a (rather extraordinary) tour of Le Marche and we suggest a selection of must-do (and see) sites around Lake Garda. Turn the page for our full list of contents.

As ever I welcome feedback on the magazine – so do take time, if you can, to write or email your thoughts and comments. Till next time, enjoy the issue!

Paul P.

Paul Pettengale Editor

PS Italia's brand new guide to Venice, the Veneto & Beyond is on sale now (£7.99). Visit www.italytravelandlife.com/italyguides for details.

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Subscribe to *Italia!* and save money on the usual price* and get the magazine delivered directly to your door every month! Turn to page 30 for more information.

*UK orders only



Polignano a Mare, Homes in Puglia, page 20

AWARD WINNER!
The Italian Tourist Board voted *Italia!* the 'Best Overall Publication 2011'



THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



LORENZA BACINO is a seasoned traveller and journalist who spends much of her time in Italy. In this issue she writes about her favourite outside spaces around Lake Garda and

suggests seven things you really must do when visiting the region. Join her on her travels, starting on page 41.



FLEUR KINSON heads south – way south – in this issue, visiting Puglia to explore how the property market there is doing. After a bit of a tough time that kicked off with the recession

in 2007/8 the area is seeing renewed growth and interest with both domestic and overseas buyers alike. See page 20.



SARA SCARPA has lived for much of her life in Venice, and she knows the whole of the Veneto region well. For this issue she and her partner ventured to Vicenza, an intriguing

smaller city that deserves a visit. Follow her path, and her eating and staying recommendations from page 32.



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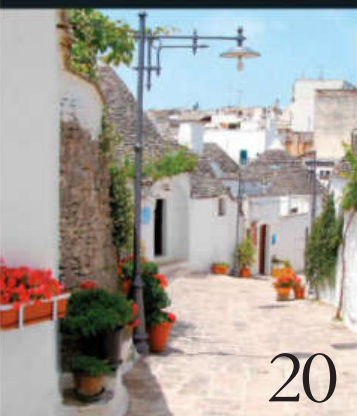


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Sardinia has nearly 2,000km of coastline, much of it remarkably beautiful.

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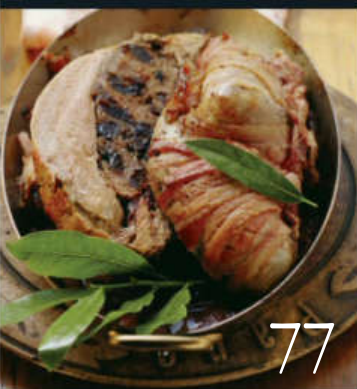
Venice native **Sara Scarpa** goes inland to the City of Palladio, the City of Gold.

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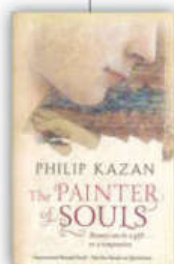




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ON THE COVER



YOUR ITALIA!

READERS' PHOTO COMPETITION!

Send us your favourite photos from your Italian travels, and each month the best photo will win a bottle of **Nino Franco Rustico Prosecco** and cooler!*



▲ THIS MONTH'S WINNER

Mark Rea, Brighton

"A view of the Church of Santa Maria dell'Isola on Isola Bella – the 'Beautiful Island' – taken from Tropea town, Calabria, Italy."

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YOUR PHOTOS ON
OUR WEBSITE:

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Italy travel and life

WIN!
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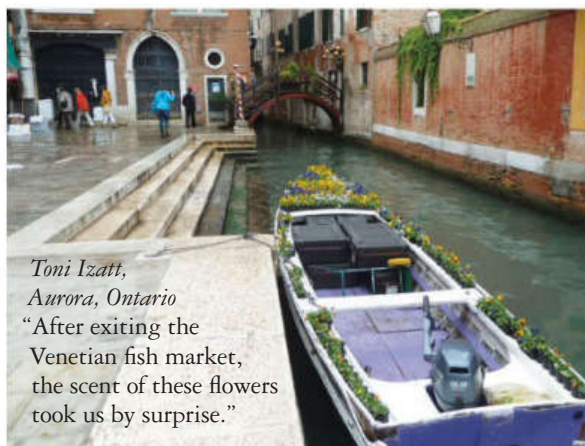


Brian Huddart, Washington

"Famous for its elaborate terraced gardens and the location for scenes from films like *Casino Royale*, this is a view of Villa Balbianello, located on the tip of a small, wooded peninsula on the western shore of Lake Como. Approaching by boat is something special and was the highlight of a fabulous holiday."

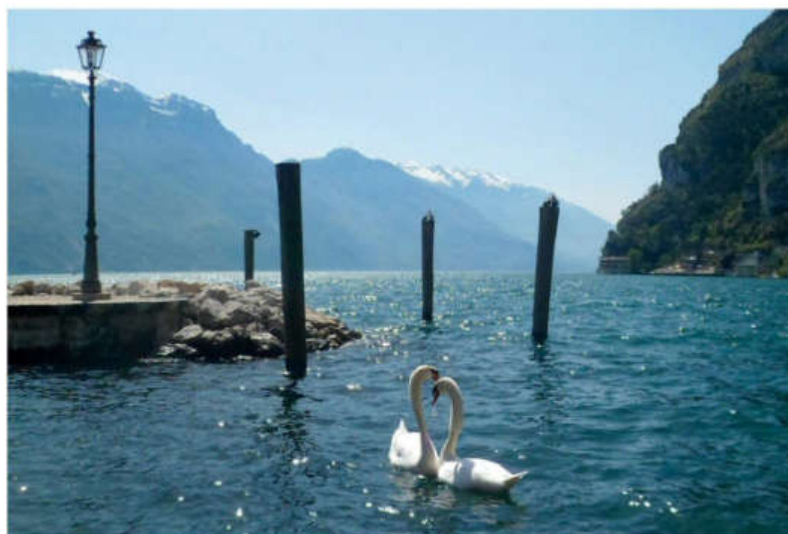
♥ *Janet Turner, Huddersfield*

"These two lovebirds, forming a heart with their necks, were photographed at Riva del Garda with a lovely backdrop of the lake and mountains."



Toni Izatt, Aurora, Ontario

"After exiting the Venetian fish market, the scent of these flowers took us by surprise."



Peter Colligan

"Whilst strolling round the beautiful town of Spello in Umbria we spotted these two cats sitting on a window sill. They look so cute!"



♥ *Giles Harrison, St Albans*

"The raised 'Donkey's Way' at Brisighella, Emilia Romagna. We are regular visitors to the area, with friends in nearby Forlì, and there is nothing nicer than driving out to the surrounding Apennine hills."

HOW TO ENTER Email high-resolution (300dpi) jpegs of your photos of Italy to italia@anthem-publishing.com or send prints to 'Reader Photo Competition' at the address given on page 18. Please include a brief explanation of your photo, plus your name, delivery address and a phone number (for our couriers). You must be over 18 to enter.

READER OFFER *Italia!* readers get a 10 per cent discount off Nino Franco wines from www.sommelierschoice.com until 1 December 2015 by entering the code 'italia10' at the checkout.

Please note: Any photos you submit must be your own work and you must have the right to send them for inclusion on this page. By sending your entry, you are confirming that *Italia!*'s use of your photo(s) will not constitute infringement of any rights, and confirming that you are over 18.



*Prosecco and cooler delivered to mainland UK addresses only

THIS MONTH

October 2015

In **Italian news** this month, Sicily's 'ghost hotel', Procida's dirty beach, and new safety measures for Lombardy's sex workers...



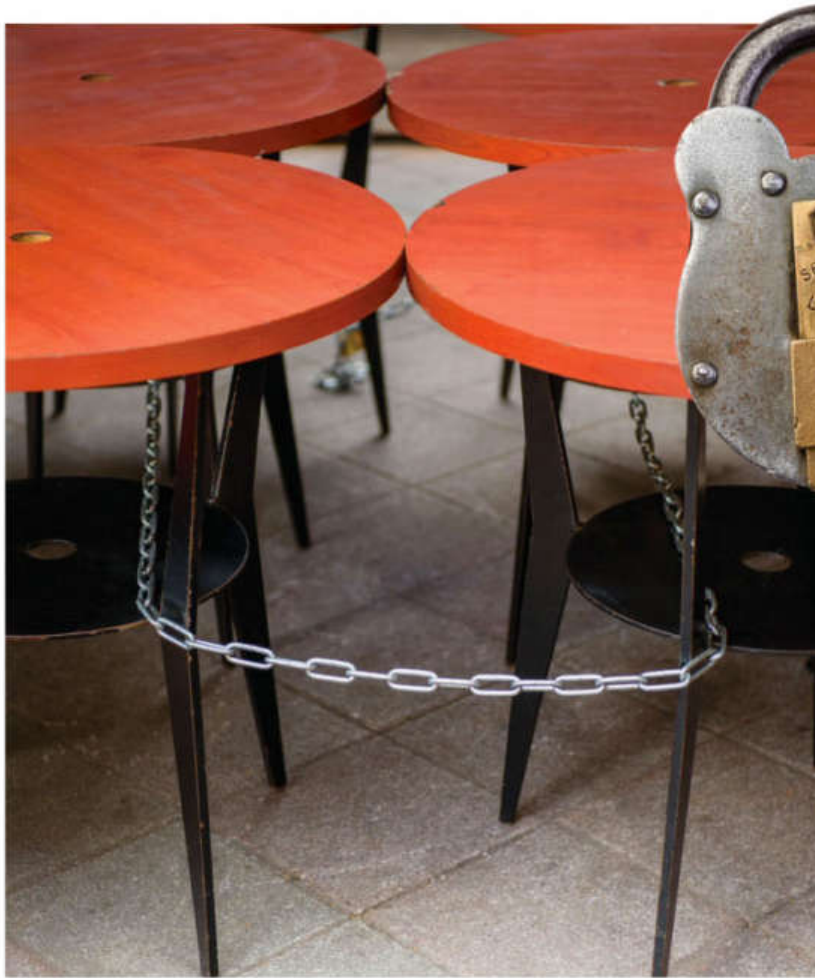
EMPTY TOWERS

Meet the Sicilian hotel that's had no guests in 61 years. It's had four openings and two refurbishments, but for the Grande Hotel San Calogero in Sicily, one statistic stands out above them all: it's never had a single guest. When work began on the hotel way back in 1954, it seemed like a recipe for success: set atop the 1,300-foot-high Monte

Kronio, the site afforded magnificent views

across the Sicilian landscape. However, it was another 30 years before the five-storey, 300-room structure was finally complete, and even then it couldn't open because no one took responsibility for its management. Eventually, after several more years of stasis, local authorities took the project under their wing. Repairs were made and, in 1993, an opening ceremony was held – only for them to discover that there was no sufficient drainage system in place.

Another five years and around £500,000 later, the drainage system was fixed but the hotel was forced to close again, for unknown reasons. In 2000, a group of investors took the reins and it finally looked like the luxury hotel would open in earnest. But alas, the correct paperwork wasn't filed and the project hit the skids again. And so, the Grande Hotel San Calogero remains Sicily's ghost hotel. Well, at least it won't get any bad reviews.



Photography © iStock, unless otherwise stated

SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS



ALL HAIL THE PILOTS!

An Alitalia plane was forced to make an emergency landing after being damaged in a hailstorm – the fourth time in a month that aircraft have encountered difficulties in such weather. Flight AZ2016 was en route from Rome to Milan when it flew into “an extraordinary and violent hailstorm”, with witnesses claiming that the craft was pelted with hailstones the size of tennis balls. Indeed, such was the ferocity of the storm that a cockpit window was shattered and the nose of the plane was crushed. The pilots were ordered to land the plane – and its 110 passengers – at Naples.

A DERRY LONG JOURNEY

Some men take football-management computer games seriously, but few more so than Alessandro Colombini from Livorno. The 19-year-old was so passionate about his chosen team on *Football Manager*, Derry City, that he made a 5,000km round trip to Northern Ireland to watch them play in real life. Colombini had picked Derry as his team because he has an interest in Irish politics, and we're told he took them to Champions League glory. During his visit to their ground, he managed to get an autograph from striker Paddy McLeney. The match, against Limerick, finished 0-0.



Prostitutes in northern Italy are being made to wear reflective clothing in a new measure to improve road safety. It was decided that women working in the town of Spino d'Adda, on the main road from Milan to Cremona, were a hazard for motorists, as they weren't clearly visible in their usual high heels and mini-skirts. Under the new measure, the women will face a €500 (£350) fine if they fail to wear high-vis jackets and trousers – like those commonly worn by builders and construction workers. Deputy mayor of the town, Luciano Sinigaglia, told news website *Corriere Della Sera*, “The sex workers should be treated as employees who work on road construction and be forced to wear clothes that make them visible.” Around 15,000 sex workers flocked to the Milan area to capitalise on the influx of visitors to the recent 2015 Expo World Fair being held in the city. We do understand that some folk are turned on by people in uniform, but women dressed as construction workers might just be taking the idea a bit far...

Anyone who's seen the Oscar-winning film *Il Postino* will have fond memories of the beautiful beach that graces some of its scenes. However, that beach – La Spiaggia del Pozzo Vecchio, on the island of Procida, near Naples – has been making headlines for all the wrong reasons this summer after the sea there was found to contain bacteria levels, including eColi, three times higher than the legal limit. The presence of the bacteria is believed to have been caused by the inadequate drainage of human waste and the beach was closed to swimmers while work was carried out to solve the problem. It's the latest in a series of setbacks for authorities in the region, with five other beaches between Naples and Sorrento already having been closed over the summer due to health and safety issues. The beach has since re-opened, with local authorities insisting that the problem was "an isolated incident".

Photograph © Evan Vucci/AP/Press Association Images

Foreign directors have been hired to rescue some of the nation's under-performing museums and art galleries



THE (NON) ITALIAN JOB

Some of Italy's top museums and art galleries are to be run by foreign directors. You may recall, a few months ago, we ran a story about Italian companies using English phrases to advertise their businesses, and the uproar it was causing among traditionalists. Well, those same people are unlikely to be happy with the news that foreign directors have been hired to rescue some of the nation's under-performing museums and art galleries. The appointments came after the government launched its first international recruitment drive in a bid to re-energise its stagnant institutions – of the ten most visited museums and galleries in the world, not one is Italian. Seven of the 20 new directors are foreign and one, British/Canadian James Bradburne, will take charge of Milan's Pinacoteca di Brera art gallery. He said, "It is paradoxical that Italy has so much great stuff, and some great museum professionals, but its permanent collections are under-valued and under-visited."

EXPERTS SLAM RESTORATION OF 2,000-YEAR-OLD MONUMENT

The restoration of a monument inside the Roman Forum in Rome has been slammed as "fake" by experts. The Temple of Peace, built in 75AD by Emperor Vespasian, is being reconstructed using modern "Portland" cement, and leading architect Sandro Maccallini is among those who have poured scorn on the project. He described the restoration as "a totally fake column, with a fake base, with a fake core and a capital that is probably fake".

Rome City Council's arts and culture department defended the procedure, likening it to the anastylosis used to restore the Acropolis in Athens. But Maccallini wasn't having any of it. In a complaint reported by the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper, he said, "The Roman Forum will lose its identity as an archaeological site, unique in the world, where everything is precious and unique because it is authentic."



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER – LOST AND FOUND

If Hollywood scriptwriters had dreamt up the plot, you'd say it was far-fetched: a young Italian woman meets a married German soldier during the Second World War, becomes pregnant and then has the baby taken away from her. Then, 71 years later, when the woman is 92, she is reunited with her daughter. But this isn't the fruit of someone's imagination: it is real life. The unnamed elderly woman was living in Novellara, a small village in northern Italy, when she fell in love with the soldier, and lost all contact with her baby girl when his family took her away to live with them. As the girl, Margot Bachmann, grew up, she was told that her mother was Italian but had died during the war. It was only when she was 71, after her father had passed away, that she used the International Tracing Service to locate her mum, and the pair were reunited in August in an emotional meeting. "When I began to look into the whereabouts of my mother to find out a little more, I never imagined that I would one day be able to hug her," Bachmann told *Il Quotidiano* newspaper.

ESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP P



HOLIDAY IN THE TORRE DI PORTONOVO

The Torre di Portonovo is a famous watchtower that was built literally on the beach of the beautiful Riviera del Conero. It was Pope Clement XI (1649-1721) who gave the orders to build the tower, using an original drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, and now this unique location is being offered as unforgettable holiday accommodation! The roof terrace, with its ceiling supported by huge oak beams, was used to watch enemy ships and as a signalling post in case of pirate incursions. Le Marche Explorer is proud to offer this unique location exclusively to the foreign market. For more information and to make bookings go to www.le-marche-explorer.com.

FRAUDSTERS ARE SELLING FAKE FOOD

Holidaymakers in Italy are being sold dodgy food and fake wine as some vendors seek to cash in on the tourist boom. Fraud police carried out an investigation into 600 different holiday sites over the summer, and found that around 45 per cent of them were cheating tourists with fake goods. "Italian and foreign tourists expect the best from our country: quality products prepared according to the Italian traditional way," said Health Minister Beatrice Lorenzin. In total, Italian police seized more than £50,000 worth of illegal and potentially dangerous food and wine during the investigation.



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RTL 102.5

progetto grafico Daniela Boccadoro

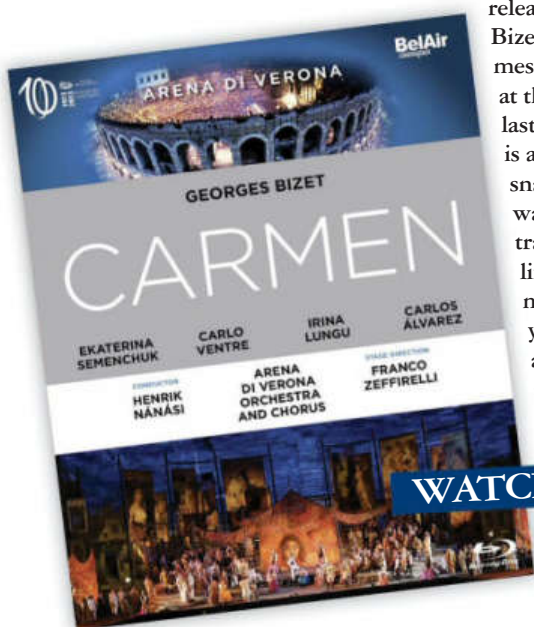
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ITALIA!'S *Top picks*

Grand hotels in beautiful places, opera in your living room, and cycling races from the Belle Epoque... It's all here in our regular show of **the best of Italy** and Italian products...

BIZET'S CARMEN IN VERONA

If you're looking for the ultimate Italian experience, enjoying an opera in Verona must come close. The next best thing to actually being there is watching it in glorious high definition on Blu-ray – and you can do just that by snapping up the recently released production of Bizet's *Carmen*, which mesmerised audiences at the Verona Arena last year. Okay, so Bizet is about as Italian as snail's legs, but as you watch this classic tragedy come to life in megapixelled majesty, we reckon you won't mind a jot. £22, www.amazon.co.uk



GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO

We went all teenager ("OMG!") when we clapped eyes on this little pocket of paradise. Overlooking Lake Garda at Tremezzina, the Grand Hotel Tremezzo is a five-star retreat boasting art nouveau interiors, a luxurious spa, luscious landscaped gardens and no fewer than five restaurants. But best of all has to be that view (oh, and the fact that George Clooney's holiday home is just down the road – kind of). Double rooms start at €420 (£306) in low season. www.grandhoteltremezzo.com

TRY THIS!



LAURA VITALE

The barbecue season may be over (boo!), but you can still add some summer to your sausages with Lupetta's sumptuous new cherry tomato sauces. Using only the finest sweet cherry tomatoes from Sicily, these gorgeous garnishes – one with capers and olives, the other with porcini mushrooms (pictured) – are bottled in small beer bottles within 24 hours of harvesting, making them as fresh as they are delicious. What's more, they contain no preservatives, so they're a healthy choice, too. £2.69 for a 330g bottle. www.lupetta.co.uk

TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...

Top 3 gifts for COFFEE LOVERS

From the **espresso** to the **cappuccino**, the Italians have given us most of the forms of coffee we know today...



1 INNOCENTE

Hundreds of years ago, Italian peasants couldn't afford coffee beans, so they brewed a hot drink made from wood-roasted barley instead. It became known as *caffè d'orzo*, and quickly grew in popularity as a delicious and healthy (being caffeine-free) alternative to coffee. Now, a company called Innocente has fine-tuned the recipe to produce its own delicious variety of the drink, which is now available in the UK. Go and try it – we think you'll be pleasantly surprised. £5.99 for 250g/£7.99 for 500g, www.amazon.co.uk



ITALIAN MASTERS 2016 CALENDAR

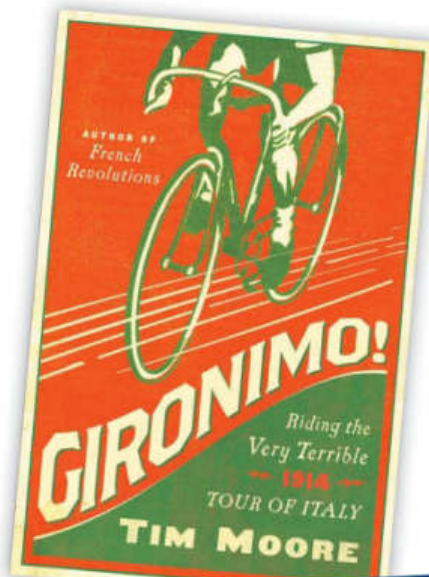
It's around about now that many of us will be contemplating buying a 2016 calendar. Well, here's one for your consideration: Italian Masters features some of the finest works by the likes of Botticelli, Da Vinci and Michelangelo, and it's large, month-to-view format means you can easily plan your forthcoming activities. A weekend away in Venice? We thought you'd never ask! £9.99, www.calendarclub.co.uk

VALENTINO SCARF

This Valentino Multicolor Camubutterfly Print Silk Square Scarf is the perfect seasonal accessory – if you've got some cash to splash. Made in Italy from 100 per cent silk twill, it's emblazoned with colourful butterfly motifs – which is apt really, as it's sure to set hearts a-fluttering. There's quite a range of designs at the website too, with quite a range of prices to match – and no, this is not the most expensive! £289, www.uk.forzieri.com

GIRONIMO! ➤

The famous Giro d'Italia bicycle race celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2014 and in anticipation of the occasion author Tim Moore (author of *French Revolutions* and, more importantly to Italophiles, *Continental Drifter: Taking the Low Road with the First Grand Tourist*) rode the original 3,162km route – wait for it – on a 100-year-old wooden bike, in period costume! His adventures are captured in his fascinating new book, *Gironimo! Riding The Very Terrible 1914 Tour Of Italy* (ISBN 978-0224092074, Yellow Jersey, £14.99). Fuelled by Chianti and with the winner of the original race's diary for company, his two-wheeled travels make for enthralling and hilarious reading! www.amazon.co.uk



READ THIS!



LA ROSA BOWL

You'll feel like a Roman emperor eating food off Alessi's gold collection of tableware, created exclusively for Harrods. It might be a little bling for some people, but one thing's for certain: it'll get your guests talking! Highlights include the decorative La Rosa bowl, designed by Emma Silvestris of LPWK (£169, pictured), and the Kalisto kitchen boxes by the almost-aptly named Clare Brass of CSA (£175 each) – which will make your dinner parties shine. www.alessi.com

THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS

2 HANDPRESSO PUMP

Hiking in the great outdoors is terrific fun, but the chances of stumbling upon a Starbucks are virtually zero [Don't bet on it – Ed].

Luckily, help is at hand – literally – with the Handpresso Pump, a little device that will conjure an espresso in seconds. You don't need a battery or electricity – you just add hot water from your flask, start pumping and voila! – a drop of the good stuff to help you forget those aching limbs. £69, www.handpresso.com



3 TUSCAN GLASSWARE

Everyone knows that a cup of coffee is a great way to start the day, but you can add even more cheer to your breakfast table by drinking your chosen brew from one of these beautifully stylish espresso cups. Mouth-blown by renowned Tuscan glassware manufacturer IVV, each cup is 6.5cm high and features splashes of vibrant colour – a surprising diversion from the usual plain white porcelain variety. £11.50 for a set of two, www.divertimenti.co.uk



EVENTS IN OCTOBER 2015

A hobby fair in Milan, sailing in Trieste, food and wine in Tuscany and truffles in Piedmont. It's all happening **in Italy this month** – unless you're a fan of the Italian rugby team, in which case it's all happening in England...

HOBBY SHOW

1-4 October

Milan

Whether your hobby of choice is crochet, jewellery-making or carpentry, there's a good chance you'll find something to interest you at this huge four-day show at Milan's Fiera Milano. All kinds of exhibitors will be on hand to sell you their wares, give you tricks of the trade, or maybe even tempt you with a pastime you didn't know existed. By the time you leave, you could have lots of new hobbies! www.hobbyshow.it

BOCCACCESCA

2-4 October

Certaldo, Tuscany

If you're serious about your food and wine, the Boccaccesca is a must. Held in the picturesque town of Certaldo, in the heart of Tuscany's rolling countryside, it's a celebration of the region's best produce. You can expect stalls selling tastebud-tempting cheeses, olives and breads, demonstrations by top local chefs, and talks by leading sommeliers on the season's grapes. There will be live entertainment, too, to make sure you're dancing, as well as eating and drinking, long into the night. www.boccaccesca.it

BARCOLANA

3-11 October

Gulf of Trieste

Spectacles don't come more, er, spectacular than the Barcolana, a grand regatta in the Gulf of Trieste. First held in 1969 with just 51 yachts taking part, it has expanded dramatically in the ensuing years, and in 2014 an incredible 1,878 vessels took to the sea. Apart from its vast scale, the other thing that makes the event so enthralling is that anyone can take part, so amateur sailors line up against world-class seamen. (See this month's Viewpoint, over the page, for more.) www.barcolana.it

RUGBY WORLD CUP: ITALY VS IRELAND

4 October

London

Italy will have been encouraged by their draw for Pool D, which pitted them against France, Ireland, Canada and Romania. While France and Ireland will undoubtedly be the favourites for qualification, the Italians have been on the rise in recent years and can't be ruled out. Today's match at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London will separate the men from the boys, and seeing as tickets are like gold dust, we'll be watching it at home with a glass of Chianti and some pizza. www.rugbyworldcup.com

FEAST OF SANTA REPARATA

8 October

Florence

Florence's very first cathedral was named after the 3rd-century Christian virgin and martyr Santa Reparata, and she remains a co-patron of the city to this day. Every year on 8th October, Florence celebrates her life with a foot race through the streets, starting and finishing in Piazza San Giovanni, in front of the Duomo. The race is preceded by a procession in period costume.

TARTUFO BIANCO D'ALBA

10 October

– 15 November

Piedmont

Autumn is the season of truffles in central and northern Italy, and the town of Alba in Piedmont is particularly renowned for its white variety. In October and November every year (weekends only), thousands of people flock here from around the world to celebrate the delicious delicacy. As well as a food fair, selling truffle-related goodies but also local wines, cheeses and more, there's live entertainment, a medieval parade and even a donkey race!



Rome Film Fest at Parco Della Musica

RUGBY WORLD CUP: ITALY VS ROMANIA

11 October

Exeter

Italy's final Pool D game is against the unfancied Romanians at Sandy Park in Exeter. Could this be an opportunity to rack up the necessary points for qualification, and a potential quarter-final tie against the mighty All Blacks of New Zealand? Somehow, we think it'll be too little too late, as it's hard to see beyond Ireland and France for those two berths in the last eight. But we'll be rooting for the boys in blue anyway.

www.rugbyworldcup.com

ROME FILM FEST

16-23 October

Rome

It might only be ten years old, but this celebration of the silver screen creates quite a buzz around the Italian capital. The Auditorium Parco della Musica will host most of the activities – from screenings to discussions, conferences to debates – but the whole city gets a serious dose of film fever as luminaries from the industry arrive in town. One of the highlights of the event is a film market in Via Veneto, famed as one of the locations in the classic Federico Fellini film *La Dolce Vita*.

www.romacinemafest.it

EUROCHOCOLATE

16-25 October

Perugia

We're guessing you won't need your arm twisting too much to attend this one! Eurochocolate, now in its 22nd year, is touted as an 'International Chocolate Exhibition' but, happily, the delicious confectionery isn't only exhibited, you can sample it too! This year's theme is 'Eat Your Mustache', and – as well as the usual talks and tastings, gourmet workshops and gifts – you can experience the world's biggest chocolate mustache sculpture. Our mouths are watering just thinking about it!

www.eurochocolate.com

SAGRA DEL TORDO

24 & 25 October

Montalcino, Tuscany

Perched on a hill in Tuscany, the town of Montalcino is a photogenic delight. It's also home to Brunello di Montalcino wine, just one of the many local goodies that will be flowing at this annual festival, which translates as the Feast of the Thrush. The event celebrates the town's medieval history with costumed re-enactments, drum parades, archery trials and a huge feast inside the walls of the castle. Roll up!

BOLOGNA JAZZ FESTIVAL

26 October

– 26 November

Bologna

The deep hum of a double bass, the delicate tickling of ivories, a crisp blast of brass... If that sounds like your idea of heaven, you'll be in your element at the Bologna Jazz Festival. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the prestigious event, and in honour of that milestone there will be ten concerts spread throughout the month. These range from Ron Carter (26 October) to the Mark Turner Quartet (6 November) and the Brad Mehldau Trio (23 November). www.bolognajazzfestival.com

HALLOWE'EN

31 October

Corinaldo, Le Marche

This really isn't an Italian festival and traditionalists may scoff, but Hallowe'en is being celebrated more and more in Italy, and there is one village in Le Marche where they take it all quite seriously. The Festa della Streghe a Corinaldo (the Witch Fair of Corinaldo) sees the Marche town decorated in all manner of spooky motifs, as well as statues made from giant pumpkins and the like. www.missstrega.it

Please note that the dates of all events are subject to change. If you plan to attend, check events are going ahead before you travel. All attempts are made to present the correct details.

VIEWPOINT

The **Barcolana Regatta** will take place off Trieste on the 11th of October this year. A fixture on the European sailing calendar since 1969, this year's race will be the 47th iteration of the event...

The Barcolana Regatta is now the largest sailing race in the Mediterranean. And there's a good reason for that: it's pretty much a free-for-all. Unusually for a sailing race, and particularly one of this size, the Barcolana features boats of all classes starting from the same line. This makes for an infamously crowded and potentially chaotic race with not only boats but also sailors of different standards competing together for the first wind.

The race – it always takes place on the second Sunday in October – is the culmination of a week of events that will include the 'Young', 'Fun',

Challenge', 'Classic', 'Night Jotun Cup' and 'DHL Trophy'. On land there will be food, wine and music all week, with local and international businesses and organizations offering all manner of cultural and commercial events.

The vantage points make the race quite special too. Spectators – and there will be up to a quarter of a million of them – take their place not only on the Rive, the Trieste seafront, but also on the highlands above the city.

If you want to compete, you should set sail now really. The Bay of Biscay can be a bit unpredictable at this time of year... www.barcolana.it







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LETTERS TO ITALIA!

Share your Italian experiences with us, and tell us what you would like to see in the magazine, by sending your photographs and letters to italia@anthem-publishing.com...



Look out for a feature on wheelchair access for visitors to Italy.

Photography © iStock

VISITING RAVENNA

We have been taking your magazine, on and off, since the very first issue and have been subscribing now for the past six years. In fact, I can still remember discovering issue 1 of Italia! at our local WH Smiths and picking it up just out of interest. I really enjoyed the writing and I could sense that you enjoyed making the magazine and writing and compiling features on Italy. It has always been a good read and the images evoke well the feeling of being in Italy, a country that we have come to love over the years.

Anyway, I should come to the point! We are fortunate in that we have now reached a stage of life we like to think of as semi-retirement, where although we still work – my husband is a wine buyer, I am a food photographer – we do so in a way that suits us and our lifestyle. The children have grown up and flown the coop now so we have a lot more time to ourselves, some of which time we like to spend driving down to Italy and discovering new places (and sometimes wines!) along the way.

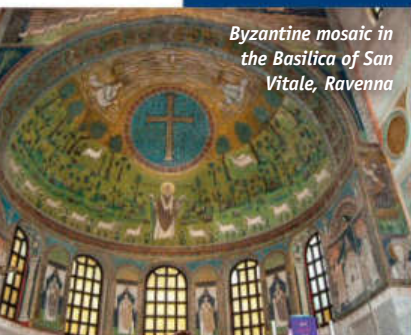
I wanted to write – this is actually the first time I have written to the magazine, except to enter a few competitions over the years – to ask you about the east coast of Emilia Romagna, and in particular Ravenna. We drove down there earlier this year, before the summer season got going in earnest, and visited this beautiful town for the first time – and I struggled to remember any features in your magazine about the place. It really is worth visiting, especially for the extraordinary Basilica of San Vitale, which houses some amazing mosaics. I could have spent the whole afternoon there, though my husband was keen to get going out into the country again. He had this idea that he was going to discover the Rubicon – the famous river that Julius Caesar crossed on his way to Rome to establish the Roman Empire.

Of course, we never did find it. No one ever has. Rivers change course over the years and this one seems to have disappeared entirely. Still, it kept him amused for a few days, pretending he was Julius Caesar preparing his army for the march on

Rome. And we found an agreeable *agriturismo* from which to launch our forays into the hinterland.

Georgina Ryman,
Weybridge

Byzantine mosaic in the Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna



LETTER OF THE
MONTH
OCT
2015

PURCHASING APARTMENTS

My husband and I are long-time subscribers to our favorite magazine, *Italia!* I have Italian dual citizenship and we want to purchase an apartment in northern Italy... specifically Verona.

I believe that there other readers who would like to read articles not only on purchasing houses in Italy, which you provide beautifully, but also regarding details on purchasing apartments in all parts of Italy. Could you provide us with this information as a start to our purchasing journey?

Bernardina Loukota, USA

We publish a semi-regular piece on purchasing apartments across the whole of the peninsula, though the focus is admittedly on the major cities as these are the most popular. The next one will be published early in the New Year.

FERRY TO SARDINIA

I recently picked up your latest issue of *Italia!* (September, issue 130) and was really pleased to read your piece on 'Beyond Rome', focusing on the property market in Lazio. Rome gets so much attention, but the rest of Lazio is wonderful. I lived just 30km south of Rome for several years in my early 20s. It was great to have the city close to hand, but I loved the peace and tranquility of living in the countryside. And it didn't take too long to get to Civitavecchia, from where I could get a ferry to Sardinia – back then the deck access for the night ferry was really cheap, though it meant sleeping on the hard metal floor outside with all the moths fluttering around your head.

Lizzie Walter, via email

We're glad you enjoyed the feature on Lazio Lizzie. Believe it or not my wife and I have taken that same ferry and slept on deck. In was uncomfortable, for sure, and the moths were huge!

RECIPE SECTION

I enjoy cooking the recipes you feature in your magazine, especially since you've introduced the Pronto! section as both my husband and I work and don't get home until gone 7pm so we don't have that long

to spend cooking each evening. Is there a collection of these recipes we can purchase?

Alison Alexander, via email

You could always take out a subscription to the magazine to guarantee your monthly fix of Pronto recipes. Alternatively check out The Silver Spoon's Quick and Easy Italian Recipes (published by Phaidon, £19.95) which contains 100 recipes you can cook in 30 minutes. It will be reviewed in the next issue of Italia!

ACCESSIBLE ITALY

My husband and I have visited Italy most years for our holidays, having fallen in love with the country on our honeymoon over twenty years ago. Unfortunately my husband has been hospital bound for the last year due to a spinal cord injury, and although soon to come home, is likely to be permanently wheelchair bound. We realise that parts of Italy may now be inaccessible to us but feel sure that with a little planning we can continue to spend time in the country that we love. I was wondering if there is any possibility that you might do an article on accessible holidays in Italy – hotels and villas with access for wheelchairs, getting around, flights, etc. It would be most appreciated.


Mrs Carol Birkett, Colchester, Essex


An excellent idea Carol, and one we'll follow up on.


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Homes in Puglia

Italy's high heel is a special place with a unique look and feel. It combines stunning, unspoilt geography with an orderly, prosperous culture. Property here has long offered excellent value-for-money, and continues to do so, says **Fleur Kinson**...

Far down in the nation's sun-drenched south, the long and slender region of Puglia forms the high heel of the Italian boot. Distinctive on the map, it's no less distinctive down on the ground. Puglia has landscapes, architecture and traditions all its own. Its colours and shapes are striking – chalk-white sand against turquoise water, gigantic olive trees twisting up from crimson soil, cubic houses and circular cottages topped with conical roofs. This is an enchanting, rather otherworldly part of Italy. It's like nowhere else.

Well, actually, it's quite like Greece. Like a Cycladic island, in fact – with low, whitewashed buildings all around, dazzling light, and the bright blue sea never very far away. Greece is only fifty miles or so across the water, and there's a long history of contact between Puglia and its foreign neighbour. You can catch Greek words in Puglia's local dialects if you listen carefully, and even sense something vaguely Hellenic in the culture. The people are hugely hospitable, and they're not quite as voluble and flamboyant as the southern Italian stereotype.

Puglia offers some of the best characteristics of southern Italy – climate, food, pace of life, sense of community – while avoiding some of the south's common drawbacks. It's a prosperous and well-run region,

with the lowest unemployment rate and the least official corruption of any part of Italy's south. Thinly populated and with no big cities, Puglia has a rock-bottom crime rate and is a delightful place to be. Even the ground is well-behaved. The southernmost two-thirds of Puglia has the lowest earthquake risk of anywhere in Italy.

A BUYER'S DREAM

Puglia's market for foreign property buyers is only just over a decade old. The region had long been a big hit as a holiday home destination with wealthy northern Italians, but it was exploratory Brits who first put the place on the foreign-buyer map in the Noughties. Budget airlines placed Puglia within easy reach of northern Europe in 2004, and British buyers were – as often – the earliest to start snapping up homes here. Other northern European nationalities followed, and Puglia's property prices began gently to climb. Having been so low to begin with, even with these increases Puglia still represented quite a bargain.

And it still does so today. The global financial crisis of 2008 onward diminished the number of foreign buyers in Puglia as it did in almost all other parts of Italy. And recovery has been slow. Today prices are, if anything, a little lower than they were a few years ago, and



Photography © iStock, unless stated



*The coastline is long and
full of surprises*



CAROVIGNO

Type of property **Villa**

Number of bedrooms **3**

Price **€250,000**

Location **Carovigno**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd ☎ 01322 660988**

www.casatravella.com

This lovely 3 bedroom property with swimming pool is close to resort of Specchiolla on the Adriatic coast of Puglia, some 5km from Carovigno, with lovely views over the sea, which is just 2km away, and yet only about 30 minutes from Brindisi airport.

The property consists of a main villa which provides about 80sqm of accommodation consisting of a living room with corner fireplace, kitchen, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, covered terraces and a lovely roof terrace with superb views over the surrounding countryside and down to the sea.

The property also benefits from its own *trullo* in the grounds.

The villa sits in about 3,000sqm (three quarters of an acre) of land with a swimming pool and surrounding sun terrace as well as ample parking.

A delightful villa, close to the sea as well as all amenities, and ideal for both personal use or as rental potential.



Proximity to the sea makes a property very rentable



The famous beach at Polignano a Mare

vendors more open to negotiation on price than they were before 2008. Foreign buyers are creeping back in to Puglia these days, but only slowly. It's a very good time to buy, with prices still low and very little competition from other buyers.

has the longest coastline of any mainland Italian region. And its long and slender shape means the sea is never far away. This is especially true in the Puglia's lower half – the so-called 'Salentine Peninsula' or simply 'Salento' – where the sea

Upper Salento was the first part of Puglia to become popular with foreign buyers

Puglia has homes to suit most budgets, and prices are a fraction of what you'd pay for similar properties in many Italian regions further north. Small rural homes to restore might ask as little as €30,000. Simple modern villas with two bedrooms start at about €70,000, and with three bedrooms at about €100,000. Modern two-bedroom apartments by the sea start at around €100,000, as do country houses with land. For €250,000 you might get a seaside villa, a three-bedroom home with a pool near one of Puglia's most fashionable towns, or a nice old country house. Stately farmhouse-mansions ('*masserie*') can run from €400,000 upward into the millions.

HEAD OVER HEEL

As you'd expect, different parts of Puglia see slightly different property prices. Generally speaking, homes on the coast are higher-priced than those inland. But the beauty of Puglia is that you can never actually be very far from the sea. The region

licks the region's shores from two opposite sides.

It's this southernmost half of Puglia that has proven most attractive to foreign buyers. And who wouldn't fall for an area where beaches of coarse pale sand alternate

Ostuni is a very popular tourist destination



with steep white cliffs plunging into brilliant water, where inland hills are fuzzed with pretty olive groves and topped by enchanting old towns? The northernmost half of Puglia, by comparison, is quite flat and undistinguished, and has as yet failed to grip foreign buyers' attention. To be fair, the north does boast the Gargano Promontory (the ankle spur of the boot), which is a tranquil paradise of delicious landscapes and colourful wildlife.

But let's look more closely at Puglia's southern half, which is often further divided into two halves, 'Upper Salento' and 'Lower Salento'. If you want to clarify where those are, get a map and note that Upper Salento is any part of the peninsula north and west of Lecce while Lower Salento encompasses roughly everything from Lecce down to the very end of the peninsula.

Upper Salento was the first part of Puglia to become popular with foreign buyers, and some of its lovely locales came to see higher property prices than elsewhere in Puglia. It includes the delightful Itria Valley area, which lies a few miles inland between the coastal cities of Bari and Brindisi, and which has been much admired for its rolling countryside and abundant *trulli* (conical-roofed cottages). The Itria Valley area holds key visitor towns such as Ostuni, Alberobello, Cisternino and others. Lower Salento has a slightly younger and still- ➤



Berenice and Sam Fenton enjoy several trips a year to Puglia

Photograph courtesy of Berenice Fenton

MY LIFE IN PUGLIA

Berenice Fenton and her husband Sam own a *masseria* farmhouse on the edge of the Itria Valley area of Upper Salento. They enjoy several week-long visits to the property throughout the year, and always spend a month there in the summer and at Christmas time. What drew the couple to Italy, and to Puglia in particular?

"Sam and I actually met in Puglia," Berenice explains. "It was a holiday romance. Can you believe it? It sounds so ridiculous! We carried on when we got back to London, and now we've been married for five years. Both of us had always been keen travellers in Italy, but when we met it was the first time in Puglia for each of us. We were smitten with the place, as well as each other. We love the light and the landscapes, the sea always being near, the gentle people and the fantastic food. We're both vegetarians, and we adore all the interesting ways the Pugliese prepare vegetables – so big, fresh and full of flavour. It's so easy to be vegetarian here and never get bored.

"We were really lucky to get our wonderful house. It was 2011, and the property market was still kind of frozen because of the recession. Prices were good, so we took a chance and bought our *masseria*. It's just a small one compared to how big they can be, only three bedrooms, but we do have a couple of acres of land. It needed some work, which intimidated us a little, but that all went smoother than we anticipated, actually. Our builders were lovely, dedicated people, and they put in some beautiful details. We were really impressed by how good they were and how much they seemed to actually care about the building. The land was a bit wild and untidy. We had the part nearest the house landscaped, and left the rest quite natural-looking. There's a small olive grove, which delights us no end, and we've learnt how to harvest the olives and even press them to make our own oil.

"I'd advise anyone thinking of buying a home in Italy to definitely consider Puglia. If what you want is sunshine and seaside, and friendly people and excellent food, this is a great place to be. There might not be the kind of art and architecture treasures you expect in places like Tuscany and Umbria, but Puglia has other charms that make up for that. It's really beautiful. It's unspoilt, uncrowded, safe and clean. Sam and I still occasionally explore other parts of Italy, but to be honest it's Puglia where our hearts belong."





OSTUNI

Type of property **Villa**

Number of bedrooms **6**

Price **€350,000**

Location **Ostuni**

Contact ☎ **01322 660988**

www.casatravella.com

This recently refurbished 6 bedroom villa with its own private pool is located just 5 minutes from the historic city of Ostuni and about 15 kilometres from the nearest beach. The property provides spacious accommodation over two floors which are similar and consist of the following separate apartments: Ground floor: Entrance hall, spacious lounge/dining room with fireplace, 3 double bedrooms, and bathroom. First floor (accessed by an external marble staircase): Entrance hall, spacious lounge/dining room with fireplace, 3 double bedrooms, and bathroom. Externally, the property sits in about 1.5 acres of gardens with olive grove as well as fruit and nut trees. The property benefits from a number of terraces with dining and barbecue areas, a 12x6m non-chlorine pool with hot and cold shower, sunbathing areas and a gazebo for al fresco dining, and is being sold furnished. There is sufficient secure parking for six cars, and the villa also has internet access and there are solar panels which produce sufficient electricity for the villa as well as extra further which is purchased by the electricity company.



The beautiful town of Ostuni lies just a few kilometres from the coast



The old town in Alberobello

evolving market, with a mixture of pricy and inexpensive spots. Both Upper and Lower Salento are certainly worth your investigation, and contain plenty of affordable, attractive properties – even some real bargains if you look carefully.

RESTORATION COMEDY

Puglia offers an excellent mix of newly-built, ready-restored, and unrestored old homes for sale, as well as plots of land for self-building. Only you can decide whether you prefer the simplicity of being able to use a property immediately or long for the fulfilment of bringing a tumbledown old home back to life

conical roofs. There are the stately old *masserie* – mansion farmhouses beautifully wrought in pale stone, usually sold with lots of land. There are cubic *lamie* cottages, thick-stone-walled apartments in ancient towns, old townhouses full of quirky nooks, patios, roof terraces, and so on. Unlike central Italian regions such as Tuscany and Umbria where building permissions can be extremely strict, Puglia is a touch more flexible on what you can do to its properties – though all within reason, of course!

If you buy an old character property to restore in Puglia, you can rest assured that local builders and craftsmen have the

Puglia is a touch more flexible on what you can do to its properties – within reason, of course

and styling it exactly to your taste. Certainly many foreign buyers have very successfully pursued the latter path. Whether this is ultimately more or less expensive than buying a ready-restored home is a moot point.

What's certain is that Puglia has a particularly fine crop of interesting and unusual old property types, which give scope for some really creative and satisfying restoration projects. You're likely to be charmed by Puglia's distinctive building styles. There are the cute, crazy *trullo*-topped cottages – round-walled dwellings with jaunty

time-honoured skills to return it to its original perfection – or even better. The standard of building workmanship readily available in Puglia is absolutely excellent, and relatively low-priced. Stonemasonry and the construction of vaulted ceilings are particularly impressive. But craftsmen can of course also mix traditional techniques with modern materials and amenities, giving finished buildings that are outwardly historical while offering contemporary comforts such as underfloor heating, sustainable power-generation and so on.

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PUGLIA REGION GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

The slender region of Puglia dips its heel into both the Adriatic and Ionian seas, as it is located at the bottom of the peninsula's east coast, with Molise as its neighbour in the north, Campania to the northwest and Basilicata to the west. The climate is reliably sunny, and hot and dry in the summer, with a low average rainfall year-round. The landscape away from the coast's golden sands offers wide plains and hillsides, while Brindisi and Bari have airports that are well served by budget airlines, and public transport is generally reliable, certainly around the larger towns. Puglia's profile is growing with its distinctive *trulli* a

genuine draw, but while demand for property is increasing – particularly for the characterful *trulli* – it is not yet so popular that property prices have become unaffordable, and many areas retain favourable rates.

NORTH: GARGANO PROMONTORY

❶ To the north of Puglia is the Gargano Promontory. The idyllic headland is a nature-lover's paradise with its National Park and ancient forest. The sun-soaked beaches are also a magnet for sun-worshippers from northern Italy. So the area is busy in high summer, particularly in the resorts of Vieste, Mattinata and Peschici, but much less so out of season, although it's still beautiful –

so you can still expect to make good rental returns on properties then. There's also the possibility of renting to the visitors who make religious pilgrimages to inland destinations such as Monte Sant' Angelo and San Giovanni Rotondo.

CENTRAL: FOGGIA TO BARI

❷ The landscape around the small city of Foggia is flat and very fertile and responsible for providing the ingredients for some of Italy's best pasta. The homes in and around Foggia tend to be low and solidly built – a testament to the fact that this is the only part of Puglia prone to occasional earthquakes. The land grows hilly again as you move west and south of Foggia, and there are

some very attractive but rarely-visited villages, like Lucera, above the plain. Moving south along the coast there are more appealing towns – such as chic and prosperous Trani and historic Molfetta, for example. Then you reach Bari, Puglia's capital city and rival to Brindisi, a few miles further south, with its lively *passeggiata* and colourful festivals. A particular attraction is its Saracenic kasbah-like quarters. These can be found in many of the towns and cities of the region, but Bari's are some of the biggest and most atmospheric.

THE COAST: BARI TO BRINDISI

③ South of Bari, the coast changes from craggy cliffs to flat, fertile scrubland and back again, interspersed with short, pale wisps of sand. Polignano a Mare is a charming cliff top town, while further south is the 'white city' of Ostuni, where there is much interest from foreign buyers and visitors alike. The city's *centro storico* is an astonishing pile of white buildings set on high, overlooking olive trees that stretch down to the sea. From afar, it looks like a fairytale city. It's small, but with good restaurants, and has a lively calendar of public events. Further down the coast, you arrive at Brindisi, a thriving seaport city since ancient times with a superb natural harbour. You'll enjoy great local food and an exuberant *passeggiata* in the evening.

CENTRAL: THE ITRIA VALLEY

④ This picturesque area is 'trulli central' with these cute, cone-shaped dwellings scattered right across the rolling green landscape of the Itria Valley, which forms the hinterland behind the Bari to Brindisi coast. Towns like Fasano, Ostuni, Martina Franca and Locorotondo flourish all year round and are not dependent on seasonal tourists, although the World Heritage town of Alberobello, with over 1,000 trulli, is popular with tourists whatever the time of year. Properties in this area are now much

sought-after by foreign buyers – the area is easy to get to from Bari and Brindisi airports. Move east from the Adriatic coast towards the Ionian coast and this gentle landscape breaks into crags and grottoes. Either side of the industrial port of Taranto there are dreamy white sandy beaches backed by cool pine woods.

SOUTH: SALENTO PENINSULA

⑤ Draw a line between Taranto and Brindisi and you more or less have this appealing peninsula, which has some quite distinctive cultural peculiarities that differentiate it from the rest of Puglia, including Greek influences in architecture,

language and cuisine. The attractive coast is rocky and cliff-bound and riddled with caves, and the sea is clean, calm and shallow. A few low-key beach resorts serve the occasional stretch of sand here, but elsewhere the rugged and uninhabited spaces are empty and elemental, with the best beaches either side of the iconic town of Gallipoli. There are some appealing towns down here too, like Otranto, Castro and Galatina, and baroque Lecce. The Salento Peninsula area can get quiet in the winter, but the middle-of-nowhere atmosphere it exudes is also part of the sub-region's charm.



Puglian towns are usually remarkably well kept



OSTUNI

Type of property **Apartment complex**

Number of bedrooms **1 each**

Price **€375,000**

Location **Ostuni**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd.**

☎ **01322 660988**

www.casatravella.com

Casa Travella Ltd is proud to offer this beautifully renovated property, which consists of 3 apartments in an 18th century town house in a quiet residential area, yet just a 3 minute walk from the main piazza and the historic centre of Ostuni.

The largest apartment, La Terrazza, is on the second floor and benefits from two easily accessible roof terraces with stunning views of the cathedral, and the extensive olive groves stretching over the plain to the Adriatic Sea. Below La Terrazza are two smaller apartments, L'Ombroso and L'Alcova.

La Terrazza: This apartment is designed for a couple, though there is space for three guest divans in the living room. It has two large roof terraces which, unusually for Ostuni, are directly accessible on the same level from the living room/kitchen, ideal for al fresco meals. The views are some of the best in Ostuni. The spacious living room area leads under an arch into the kitchen-diner with space for up to eight guests to dine comfortably. Off the living room is a tiled family bathroom. The double bedroom has an en suite WC with basin and a freestanding clawfoot bath. Gas central heating and air conditioning throughout.

L'Ombroso: This apartment is on the first floor below La Terrazza and is a high-ceilinged, airy apartment with lovely exposed stone arches and a balcony. There is an open-plan living room/kitchen diner with space for four people to dine comfortably. There is a romantic double bedroom with white tiled floor, en suite shower room with WC, bidet basin and freestanding clawfoot bath. There is space for two more divan beds in the living room so this apartment can sleep four people. There is air conditioning in the bedroom and mains gas central heating.

L'Alcova: This part of the house is thought to date to the 16th century. There is a pretty curtained alcove which serves as a double bedroom plus a separate single bedroom/dressing room, and space in the living room area for a second single bed. The kitchen/dining area has space for four people to eat together. There is a suntrap balcony with space for four people to eat outside. Off the living room is a family bathroom. There is air-conditioning and mains gas central heating.

All three properties have been fully renovated, and are located close to all amenities, yet just 10 minutes from the sea. Ideal for a summer residence with separate accommodation for guests.



Many urban trulli are now quite luxurious dwellings

And the good news doesn't end there. Johan Zetterberg of the estate agency Casa Puglia points out that "For restorations of historically important properties, such as *trulli*, there are EU grants available which can cover quite a large part of your overall cost of restoring – even inclusive of furnishings."

Not content merely to restore an old property to suit their taste,

the countryside. A few acres of land usually costs between €45,000 and €100,000, depending on location.

Johan Zetterberg of Casa Puglia sounds a note of caution on self-building, however. He notes a "very slow and inefficient planning application process and red tape around all the necessary permits. You will get the permissions," he says, "but it takes time!"

Holiday rental prospects are good, so you can cover some of your costs by letting your home

some foreign buyers in Puglia have instead built themselves a new one from scratch – utilising the region's superb builders and craftsmen, and creating homes which are often a delicate blend of the traditional and the contemporary.

In addition to being completely bespoke in style, self-built homes benefit from having all state-of-the-art systems in place from the ground up – proper damp-proofing, double-glazing, etc., etc. Also, you're likely to know in advance exactly how much the whole project is going to cost, whereas restoring often encounters little unexpected factors along the way.

Note that building regulations are becoming increasingly stricter in Puglia, with the minimum plot of land needed to build getting larger and larger in many towns, in order to protect the look and feel of

Whether you're looking to self-build, restore, buy ready-restored or newly-built, Puglia really is an excellent part of Italy to consider. Travel connections to and around the region are good, so you can easily reach your property.

The weather is warm from springtime to autumn, so you can enjoy escapes to the sun for a large proportion of the year. And holiday rental prospects are good, so you can cover some of your costs by letting your home to holidaymakers if you want to when you're not there.

The high heel of the boot is most definitely a colourful, fascinating, safe and beguiling place. ■

USEFUL CONTACTS

www.casapuglia.com

www.casatravella.com



STANDING BESIDE THE FONTANA DELLA BARCACCIA, the little “sinking-boat” fountain in Piazza di Spagna, looking up the Spanish Steps toward the Trinità dei Monti church, I suddenly thought of Oscar Wilde. He visited the Protestant Cemetery elsewhere in Rome in 1877, and prostrated himself before the grave of John Keats, calling it the “holiest place in Rome”. I thought of Wilde because just to the right of the steps is the entrance to the Keats-Shelley House. Here, a small memorial museum and library is dedicated to the two great Romantic poets. It’s an appropriate place in which to remember them; Keats died here of tuberculosis at the age of 25. Percy Bysshe Shelley, on

hearing of Keats’ death, wrote one of his greatest works, *Adonais*, a powerful elegy for his fellow poet. Shelley, soon died, too; drowned off Livorno at 29.

Keats’ bedroom overlooked the steps. In Keats’ time, 1821, the area was lively with visitors by day, but the nights were quiet. He might have heard the splashing waters of the little fountain during the long and sleepless hours of darkness. Nowadays, crowds fill the steps and the piazza day and night, and the Barcaccia’s voice is overwhelmed.

He is not dead, he doth not sleep

I wondered, as I stood among the crowd in the Piazza di Spagna, whether Keats’ earlier interest in Italy had influenced his work

Keats had often wished to visit Italy, “the warm south”, and had learned to read Italian; but he at last journeyed there unwillingly, driven by desperation as his illness worsened. He left his fiancée, Fanny Brawne, behind. He loved her passionately, and felt he would never see her again.

“Suppose me in Rome,” he told her, “well, I should there see you as in a magic glass...”

Keats wrote some of the most beautiful lines in the English language. I wondered, as I stood among the crowd in the piazza, whether Keats’ earlier interest in Italy had influenced his work. I went inside, and found a slim volume there called *Keats and Italy*, containing an essay by a scholar named Filippo Donini. He details many fascinating instances in which Italian literature and art enriched Keats’ work. *The Eve of St Agnes*, for example, derives from Boccaccio and from frescoes in Pisa’s Camposanto; a Boccaccio story inspired *Isabella*; a line in *Ode to a Nightingale* about Bacchus was written soon after Keats had seen Titian’s *Bacchus and Ariadne*. There are many other clear influences, as well: Ariosto, Torquato Tasso, and especially Dante. Keats was inspired by Dante’s vision of the adulterous lovers Francesca and Paolo, condemned to be whirled together, forever, in a violent storm of frustrated passion. Keats’ sonnet *A Dream* contains these lines:

*Pale were the sweet lips I saw,
Pale were the lips I kissed, and fair the form
I floated with, about that melancholy storm.*

And there is the same Dantesque imagery in the nightmare paleness of the kings and warriors in thrall to *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.

And, finally, Donini asks, could Keats, as he lay dying, have taken a final inspiration from the sound of the Barcaccia fountain, when he asked his devoted friend Joseph Severn to carve as his epitaph: Here lies one whose name was writ in water? ■

The room where Keats died



View of the Spanish Steps from Keats’ bedroom

ABOUT THE WRITER

JOE GARTMAN is a freelance writer based in Utah. A passionate amateur of art and history, and an avid traveller, he spends much time in Italy.

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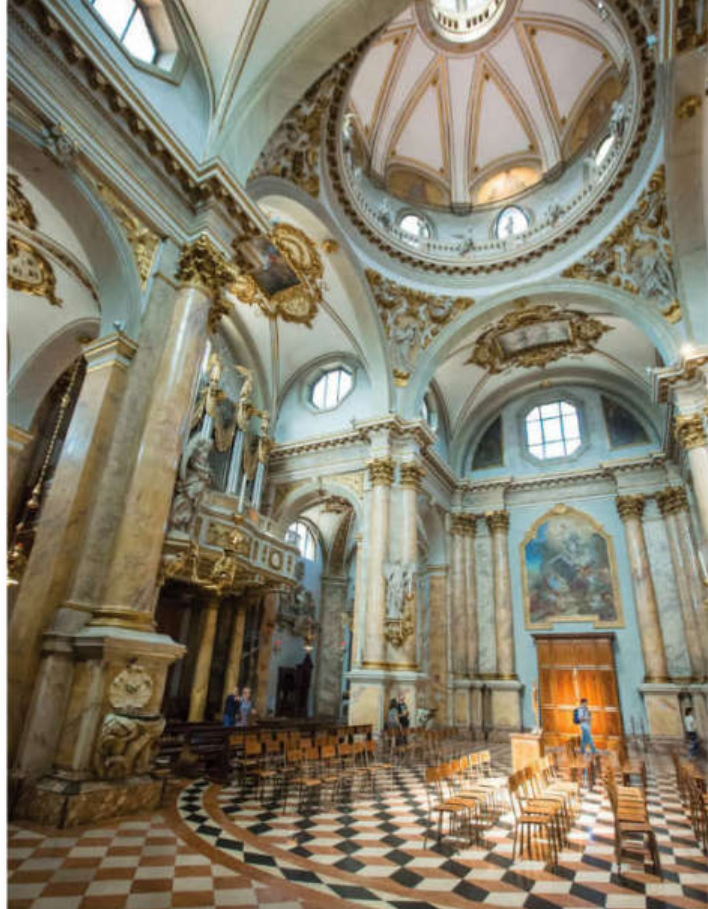


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Clockwise from top left: Back street view in Vicenza; interior of the Santuario di Monte Berico; city panorama; statue of Andrea Palladio, the city's most famous son; Villa Valmarana "ai Nani"; Vicenza riverscape; Torre Bissara; Piazza dei Signori

Photograph © iStock



Photograph: iStock

48 HOURS IN...

Vicenza

Venice native **Sara Scarpa** went inland to Vicenza – the City of Palladio, the City of Gold – to spend one day in the city centre and one day at the nearby Palladian villas...

Vicenza is commonly known as the city of Palladio, the great architect who in the 16th century changed the look of the city with his iconic palaces and villas. The city centre and the Palladian villas in the surrounding countryside are so important as to now be recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. But Vicenza is not only beautiful, it is also rich – one of the richest cities in Italy thanks to its textile and steel industries, and to its world famous production and trade of gold, which is why it is also known as the City of Gold. Its elaborate goldsmith artistry has been charming the whole world for centuries and the city still attracts buyers and traders every year at its internationally famous jewellery fair, Vicenzaoro.

Located in the northeast of Italy, between Venice and Verona, Vicenza is not as well known as its neighbour sisters. Yet this elegant city is the real heart of the Veneto region, not only from a geographical point of view but also from an artistic and cultural point of view as it offers great architecture, important cultural events and superb food. We went to Vicenza recently for a weekend to visit relatives. We spent the first day in the sophisticated city centre and the second visiting some of the nearby Palladian villas.

We started our walk in the morning from Piazza Matteotti, where stands the Teatro Olimpico, the oldest surviving covered theatre in the world. Begun in 1580 by Andrea Palladio, who took his inspiration from the Roman amphitheatres, today it hosts opera, classical and jazz performances. In the



WHAT TO SEE AND DO

IL TEATRO OLIMPICO ①

Piazza Matteotti, 11

☎ +39 0444 222800

www.teatroimpicovicenza.it

The theatre started by Andrea Palladio (completed by his son, Silla), was built in the manner of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. It was inaugurated in 1585 and since 1994 is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is the oldest surviving indoor theatre in the world and the only one of three Renaissance theatres still surviving. The interior simulates the outdoor setting of classical theatres with a magnificent proscenium and amazing perspectives created by the *trompe l'oeil* scenery (designed by Palladio's pupil Scamozzi). Here nowadays are held classical music performances and concerts during the Vicenza Jazz Festival in spring, and theatre performances in autumn during the Season of Classical Performances.

IL SANTUARIO DI MONTE BERICO ②

Viale X Giugno, 87

☎ +39 0444 559411

www.monteberico.it

The uphill walk to the Sanctuary is tiring but definitely worth it for the breathtaking view. (Go at sunset if you can.) The Sanctuary is stunning and you can also visit the small adjoining museum with hundreds of ex-votos. In the refectory there is an oil painting by Paolo Veronese, *The Feast of St Gregory the Great* (1572), which during the revolutionary outbursts in 1848 was cut in 32 pieces by the Austrian soldiers and had to be greatly restored.

LA BASILICA PALLADIANA ③

Piazza dei Signori

☎ +39 0444 222811

www.museicivicivicenza.it

The Basilica named for Andrea Palladio was once called the Palazzo della Ragione and was inspired by the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua. The *palazzo* was redesigned, and renamed, by Palladio himself. The building now has three independent exhibition spaces which are used to host architecture and art exhibitions.

THE PALLADIO MUSEUM ④

Palazzo Barbarano

Contrà Porti, 11

☎ +39 0444 323014

www.palladiomuseum.org

Note that a combined ticket 'Museum Card' gives admission to the Teatro Olimpico, the Palazzo Chiericati, Museo del Risorgimento e della Resistenza, Museo Naturalistico Archeologico, Church of Santa Corona, the Palazzo Leoni Montanari Galleries and the Palladio Museum. It is valid for seven days from the first use.



Il Teatro Olimpico

DON'T MISS

BACCALÀ ALLA VICENTINA
The *Baccalà alla Vicentina* (Salt Cod Vicenza-Style) has been named by the EuroFIR (European Food Information Resource Network) as one of the five traditional foods representative of the *Bel Paese*. It is a traditional dish from Vicenza made of dried salt cod slowly simmered in milk and flavoured with a *soffritto* of garlic, onions and anchovies. It is usually eaten with polenta.

square we also found the tourist information centre, where we picked up a map and some brochures with information about events and exhibitions in the city.

We passed by Palazzo Chiericati, the city museum and art gallery, also designed by Palladio. We walked along Corso Palladio, passing Casa Cogollo, a house by Palladio mistakenly believed to be his house, and walked along a side street of Corso Palladio called Contrà Porti, where

square stands the Basilica Palladiana, designated by UNESCO as a National Monument, and the Torre Bissara, and on the opposite side the Loggia del Capitaniato, il Palazzo del Monte di Pietà and the Church of San Vincenzo. The piazza (as always in Italy) is the heart of the city and is where locals tend to meet for a chat, an *aperitivo* or two and some people watching. Here is where the *bella figura* (the good impression) is important and where looking good is a must.

If you think that you might have not packed the right clothes, do not panic

the architecture is interesting as the sumptuous palaces in Gothic-Venetian style show the strong connection Vicenza has always had with Venice. (Vicenza was actually governed by Venice from 1404 until the end of the 18th century.)

We then walked back to Corso Palladio and turned left to Piazza dei Signori, Vicenza's main square. Here are some of the symbols of Vicenza – on the long side of the

While walking around and looking at the locals, it is easy to spot that there is wealth in Vicenza. If you think that you might have not packed the right clothes, do not panic, there are many luxury boutiques where, if you got your credit card ready, you can pick the perfect outfit to wear for an evening drink at the rooftop of the Basilica Palladiana. (I would recommend it as not only is the view over the city and the surrounding hills



fantastic and the atmosphere really great but because this is a privileged position where you can enjoy a drink on the rooftop of a Basilica designed by one of the most influential architects of all time.)

We then left the square and walked to the Duomo (*La Cattedrale di Santa Maria Annunciata*) and to Piazza Castello. Here we stopped for lunch at the restaurant Agli Schioppi, where we ate some tasty *baccalà alla vicentina* with polenta. The restaurant is part of the *Venerabile Confraternita del Baccalà alla Vicentina* (the Venerable Brotherhood of the Baccalà alla Vicentina) as here the preparation of the dish is done in strict compliance with the traditional recipe.

After lunch, we took a stroll in the Giardini Salvi, a romantic garden whose origins go back to the middle of the 16th century. Crossed by two canals and adorned with two beautiful Palladian style loggias, it is truly a picturesque place. We then walked along Viale Roma to Campo Marzio.

The following day in the same square, Campo Marzio, we were lucky enough to see the Antiques Market which takes place here for the last

time of the year in June. Throughout the year, there is a market every second Sunday of the month (with the exception of July and August) in the squares of the historical centre, such as Piazza dei Signori, Piazza Biade, Piazzetta Palladio, Piazza Garibaldi, Piazza Duomo and Piazza Castello. This is the perfect place for collectors and lovers of antiques as here you can find 18th century furniture, 16th century books, painting and sculptures and ancient coins.

From here we walked south towards Piazza X Giugno and with a long (but definitely worth it) walk we reached the Santuario di Monte Berico. Passing under the Arco delle Scalette, after around 200 steps and a steep walk that follows a picturesque porch way, we reached the top of the hill. Here, we experienced a breathtaking view: a 360 degree vista over Vicenza, the surrounding hills and plains, *I Piccole Dolomiti* (Little Dolomites), the *Altopiano di Asiago* and Mount Grappa.

The small sanctuary is a peaceful and spiritual place that stands where, in the 15th century, during a terrible outbreak of plague that killed many,

DON'T MISS

LA GATA
You should try the dessert *la Gata* (the Cat), typical from Vicenza, made with maize flour from Marano, butter, milk, local honey, almond, cocoa and, of course, a drop of grappa from Vicenza which gives a great taste and keeps the cake fresh for three months! The name "the Cat" refers to the nickname "magnagati" (cat eaters) often given to the people from Vicenza. Legend says that in the war, because of the food shortage, people were forced to eat cats.

WHERE TO STAY

G BOUTIQUE TIOZZO HOTEL 5

Via Giuriolo, 10

☎ +39 0444 326 458

www.gboutiquehotel.com

Located in the centre of the city, near the Palazzo Chiericati, this hotel offers unique and quirky rooms and a completely different experience, where present and future blend together. "Take a rest and listen to your footsteps moving over the warm wood, brush the perfect profiles of the furniture, find your own dimension and rhythm in our green oasis just a few steps away from the Palladian architectural beauties."

HOTEL DUE MORI 6

Contrà Do Rode, 24

☎ +39 0444 321886

www.albergoduemori.it

Vicenza's most ancient guest house, completely restored according to the old tradition with pieces of furniture from the end of the 19th century and from the Art Nouveau period. Located in the centre near Vicenza's main square, Piazza dei Signori.

KEY HOTEL 7

Viale Giangiorgio Trissino, 89

☎ +39 0444 505476

www.key-hotel.it

A 3-star hotel in the centre of the city near the stadium, not far from the Basilica Palladiana. Convenient for all the main monuments in the historical centre. "You can also discover the art of Vicenza and the masterpieces of Palladio by bicycle, along the cycle lanes that take you through the city and into the heart of nature. You can even take a pleasant cruise through the Veneto villas from Padua to Venice, along the route of the 18th century Venetian *Burchiello* (a typical Venetian barge)."

RELAIS SANTA CORONA 8

Contrà Santa Corona, 19

☎ +39 0444 324678

www.relaissantacorona.it

In the heart of Vicenza right next to the Teatro Olimpico, a small, elegant 18th century *palazzo* recently restored. Great staff and a very rich breakfast.

HOTEL CAMPO MARZIO 9

Viale Roma, 21

☎ +39 0444 545700

www.hotelcampomarzio.com

This modern 4-star hotel is near the railway station and has rooms to suit all budgets. (Indeed, with excellent rail links running through Vicenza from Verona in the west to Padua and ultimately Venice in the east, there is a good argument for making this city your base for exploring the wider region of the Veneto. And if you don't fancy the train, the journeys can even be undertaken by boat...)

WHERE TO EAT

RISTORANTE AGLI SCHIOPPI 10

Piazza del Castello, 26

☎ +39 0444 543701

www.ristoranteaglischioppi.com

Near Piazza dei Signori, this restaurant overlooks Piazza Castello. It is well known for being part of the *Venerabile Confraternita del Baccalà alla Vicentina* (the Venerable Brotherhood of the Baccalà alla Vicentina), for the hospitality and for its delicious traditional dishes.

€ €

SELF RESTAURANT RIGHETTI 11

Piazza Duomo, 3

☎ +39 0444 543135

www.selfrighetti.it

This self-service restaurant is a historical landmark in Vicenza built in a 17th century palace. Every Tuesday and Friday the chef prepares the famous *Baccalà alla Vicentina*.

€

IL CURSORE 12

Stradella Pozzetto, 10

☎ +39 0444 323504

www.osteriacursore.it

Near Ponte San Michele, this *osteria* has been run by the same family for many years. It stands where an old monastery used to be and takes its name from the tax collector who founded it one hundred years ago. They offer specialties like *bigoli all'anatra* (pasta with duck), *tagliatelle ai porcini*, *tagliatelle al tartufo nero*, *tagliolini con capesante* (scallops), and of course *baccalà alla vicentina con polenta*.

€ €

IL CEPPO 13

Corso Andrea Palladio, 196

☎ +39 0444 544414

www.gastronomiailceppo.com

Founded in 1971, this family-run delicatessen offers a wide range of fresh products and a small bistro/wine-bar. Their specialties are the *Baccalà alla Vicentina* (recommended by the Venerable Brotherhood of the Baccalà alla Vicentina and by the International Taste & Quality Institute), *il Baccalà Mantecato*, *il ragù di anatra*, as well as ham and cheese.

€ €

BAR BORSA 14

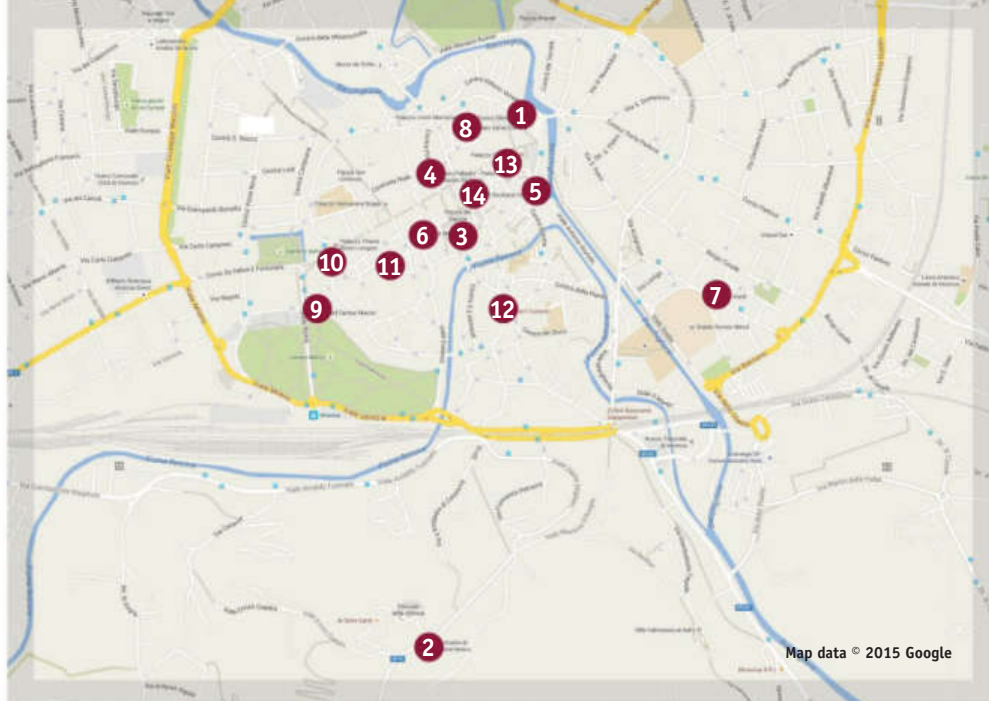
Piazza dei Signori, 26

☎ +39 0444 544583

www.barborsa.com

The atmosphere changes depending on the time of the day. In the morning they have breakfast, or brunch at the weekend, at lunch sandwiches, hamburgers or main dishes, in early evening the *aperitivo* and later on a complete dinner with a creatively designed menu.

€ €



DON'T MISS

SHOPPING

The centre of Vicenza is rich in nice boutiques, especially in Corso Palladio. There are high end stores and more affordable ones such as Benetton and Sisley. If you are in Vicenza on Thursday you can shop at the cheaper weekly market, or if you are here on the second Sunday of the month (with the exception of July and August) you can browse and shop at the Antiques Market in the main squares.

➤ **KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES** (full meal per person, not including wine)

€ Up to €25

€ € €26-€50

€ € € More than €50

La Rotonda has inspired thousands of buildings through the centuries

Mary appeared to a woman. After the construction of the church the plague ended, thanks to the miraculous intervention, and the sanctuary is today an important site for the pilgrims. The number of ex voto displayed in the adjacent museum is impressive, a clear sign of the devotion of the people.

Next we went to visit the stunning Palladian villa, Villa Valmarana "ai Nani", famous worldwide for the beautiful frescoes by Giambattista and Giandomenico Tiepolo. The villa is surrounded by pretty gardens and perimeter walls with numerous small statues of dwarves. The name *Nani* (dwarves) derives from these statues which, according to legend, in the past used to be the servants of the daughter of the former owner, who was affected by dwarfism. The noble owner of the villa, in order not to make his daughter aware of her condition, had hired for her just dwarves as servants. When one day a prince came to the villa she was made aware of her condition and committed suicide by jumping from the tower. The dwarves became petrified in their despair and so stand in the garden.

Finally, we walked to the other Palladian nearby villa, Villa Almerico Capra, commonly known as *La Rotonda* (the Rotunda) for its shape.

Inspired by the Roman Pantheon, La Rotonda is Palladio's most famous construction and it has inspired thousands of buildings through the centuries. Goethe was so impressed by the beauty of this villa to say that Palladio had managed to turn a Greek temple into a house. The villa is in perfect harmony with the landscape and seems identical on all four sides so that is no real front nor back. This was done intentionally as Palladio wanted the villa to look beautiful from every side (the villa is on top of a hill and is therefore very visible).

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE

Vicenza sits half way between Venice and Verona and is on the train line between those two cities, so the international airports at Venice, Treviso and Verona are all suitable.

➤ BY TRAIN

The train from Venice takes 45 minutes and costs €6 (one way). Vicenza train station sits to the south of the city centre and a walk into town from there would take you past the picturesque Giardini Salvi, which you should visit if you can. To get to the Sanctuary and to the villas you can get a bus but I would recommend going on foot as the walk is so pretty. Just remember to wear comfortable shoes as the walk to the Sanctuary is quite steep and the walk to the villas is along a cobbled path!



La Villa Capra "La Rotonda"



The restaurant Righetti



Grilled vegetable salad



Baccalà alla vicentina



La Villa Valmarana "ai Nani"



Il Ristorante agli Schioppi

A Jewel in the Crown

La Scuola Grande di San Rocco, and Tintoretto's work in it, is an experience that could only be found in Venice.

THE CONFRATERNITY OF SAINT ROCH is an all-encompassing Venetian experience. Both the structure of the organisation and the building's decoration are entirely Venetian. This confraternity was one of the most important of its kind in Venice. It was one of the six *scuole grandi* (major confraternities) in the Venetian Republic.

Scuola was the name given to this type of social structure. In the 1500s there were six of them called *scuole maggiori* and over one hundred *scuole minori* and they played an extremely important role in the social fabric of the city.

They were composed of lay men mostly outside the patrician class, and they served many aspects of society; they were a safety net for the members (providing for widows of deceased members, dowries for girls, etc), they conducted acts of charity in the city (helping the sick and poverty-stricken), and they participated in and funded important state processions of public display.

The major *scuole* had magnificent digs and they were in competition with one another for the greatest display; they each poured large amounts of money into making their own headquarters a rich and sumptuous environment. The confraternity dedicated to Saint Roch was founded in the late 1400s and initially housed meetings in existing churches and halls in Venice. In the early 1500s however, after securing land behind the great Franciscan church dubbed *I Frari*, they began the construction of their own building.

Architecturally, all the *scuole* follow the same plan. The ground floor is composed of a large hall (*sala terra*) and to one side a staircase led to the upper floor where there was another large room (*sala superiore*) for meetings, along with some smaller rooms off the side, the most important being the *sala d'albergo*, the room for the meetings of the treasury (the Banca and Zonta).

In the middle of the 1500s, the members of Saint Roch announced that they were looking for an artist to decorate the *sala d'albergo* on the first floor. A group of renowned local artists, Paolo Veronese being one of them, submitted a sketch to be judged by





The walls and ceilings are covered in paintings of scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary



Nowhere else in Italy is there such a celebration of one man's work

the confraternity committee. Jacopo Robusti, called Tintoretto (it translates as 'little dyer' because his father had been a dyer of silk) didn't just submit a sketch of Saint Roch in Glory, the theme requested by the committee, he actually executed the entire painting. Moreover, for a true *coup de théâtre*, he installed it in the place where the painting was to go, in the central panel of the ceiling.

The 'little dyer' won the commission and spent the next few years decorating the walls and the ceilings with his paintings of scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary. Shortly afterwards, he was commissioned to decorate the *sala superiore* with the Old Testament and finally, the *sala terra* with the Passion of Christ. All in all, he completed over 55 paintings and the entire *scuola* is a stunning testimony to this great Venetian master.

Rare is a space so overwhelmed by the aura and spirit of one soul – maybe the Old Sacristy in Florence is comparable, where the sculpture and architecture are entirely the product of Michelangelo, but it that is much smaller.

Tintoretto painted with a vigour and velocity of brush stroke that enlivens his works with movement and action. Criticised by the Florentine school for lacking in *disegno*, or form and composition, Tintoretto worked often without sketches and directly onto the canvas. However, it is precisely his loose brush strokes and lack of sharp contours that gives the protagonists in his scenes their own pulse and we, as spectators, become easily involved in the great event played out on the flat surface.

His figures often perform spatial gymnastics for greater theatricity. In fact he would often create boxes filled with wax figurines in the composition he planned to paint, in order to perfect the often complex positions. He often makes us view the action from an extravagant viewpoint; sometimes from below, or, from almost underneath the scene, or, from an extreme side angle.

Tintoretto's paintings are an explosion of creativity, of complexity of form and great virtuosity of light and colour. He captivates his audiences with his devotion to the moment and drama. The Scuola di San Rocco is a jewel in the crown of the City of Venice, the Queen of the Adriatic. ■

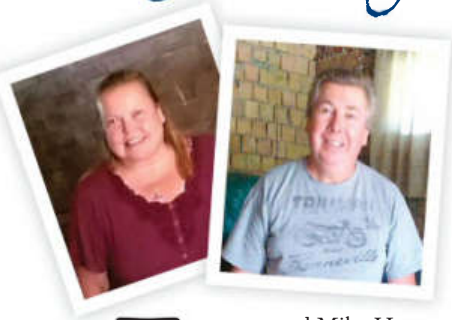


ABOUT THE WRITER

FREYA MIDDLETON is a private tour guide and writer who lives in Florence, Tuscany. You can read her blog online or learn more about her tours at www.freyasflorence.com

Photography © Freya Middleton

Getting Things Cooking in Le Marche...



With time, patience, and the help of Kevin Gibney at **PropertyForSaleMarche.com** Lucy and Mike finally found the property they needed for their cookery school...

Lucy and Mike Hayward are unabashed Italy lovers and they've found "true love" in Le Marche. But, as with all relationships, they've had their fair share of bumps in the road as they've searched for the right property for their new life at Casa Lucia, Lucy's culinary school concept.

"We'd just got the green light on the sale of our business in the UK and we gave the go-ahead to our agent on a property in Le Marche," says Lucy. "The deal was done, or so we thought."

HOUSE TO RESTORE

"We'd done a lot of work over several months with Lucy and Mike, exploring everything from B&Bs for sale to ruins to restore," says Kevin Gibney, *Titolare* of PropertyForSaleMarche.com. "We'd finally arrived at a standing house to restore outside Loro Piceno, an ideal spot for Lucy, Mike and Casa Lucia. And then we got the call..."

"I hated making that call," says Lucy. "Not just for us, but also for Kevin as the amount of work and the considered advice he'd given us was substantial." The sale of the couple's UK business had fallen through. This set back the Casa Lucia plan.

Lucy goes on to say, "Kevin was great. Professional and kind in the face of the bad news we delivered. We asked him to hang in there with us and he said it would be his pleasure to be there for us when the time was right."

The two parties stayed in touch for over two years! "Every five months or so I'd check in with Lucy and, while they still couldn't move forward, her optimism and passion for the Casa Lucia dream was contagious – I always knew they'd be back", says Kevin.

"And one late Friday afternoon I got the kind of call you almost never get," he recounts with a smile. "We called to say we'd be able to proceed and were coming to Le Marche in a couple of weeks", says Lucy.

While the first house the couple had wished to buy had now been sold, Kevin and his team set to work to find a range of other possible solutions.

"We didn't call anybody else", says Mike. "We knew he'd get it done for us." And get it done, he did. Indeed, within a week of their arrival they'd found the ideal house, right in the heart of the countryside, five minutes from Loro Piceno, that even better suited the couple's lifestyle and Casa Lucia objectives.



Lucy and Mike knew they had found La Casa Lucia

"We were thrilled", says Lucy, barely able to contain her obvious joy.

OLIVE AND FIG TREES

The house is an old stone house with an annex and two outbuildings. There are olive trees and fig trees and fields of sunflowers, with a postcard-like view of the town to one side and the Sibillini Mountains to the other.

"It's what I'd always dreamed about", says Lucy. As Kevin observes, "I took the approach that we had to find the right place, a place that had a feeling that fit the concept of the Casa Lucia culinary school".

"It's the perfect fit", says Lucy, as the Casa Lucia cookery school (opening in 2016) will focus on demystifying and simplifying the preparation of terrific Italian meals based on casual dining, local ingredients and local recipes." Mike's thrilled too, as the master mechanic found in one of the outbuildings a 1970s NSU Prinz that he plans to restore as Lucy gets things cooking at Casa Lucia!

Kevin concludes, "I really enjoyed this process as it all came together at the end because we were loyal to each other and we stuck with it through the ups and downs. I'm now looking forward to my first meal at Casa Lucia and a ride in the Marche countryside in that restored Prinz!" ■



The property is set in the countryside with a view of the town to one side

CONTACT DETAILS

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Lucy Hayward
☎ 07 906
411 830
www.facebook.com/CasaLuciaInLoroPiceno

7 things to see and do on LAKE GARDA

Italy's largest lake is famed for its scenery and its gardens. **Lorenza Bacino** visits some of her favourite horticultural spaces, and finds a cookery course and a wedding venue...

Stay in the Grand Hotel Gardone



If an air of relaxed fin-de-siècle elegance is what you're seeking, then this beautiful 19th-century villa and hotel in Gardone Riviera on the western bank is for you. The Grand Hotel Gardone began welcoming guests in 1884, and by the beginning of the 20th century a steady stream of European nobles and intellectuals were regularly passing through. It's an imposing, yet charming villa with a perfect lakeside position from where you can sit, enjoy a glass of prosecco and take in the views across the water, all the while imagining waiters in white tails serving the likes of Churchill, Nabokov or Somerset Maugham in its heyday. There's a piano bar and live music in the evenings. A new heated outdoor pool, private beach and jetty give it a modern twist.

The town of Gardone itself is quaint, with cobbled streets and frescoed façades. Elegant, ornate villas swathed in fragrant wisteria adorn the hills, pale yellow and pinkish turrets poke through the flowers, and the gardens bloom with English roses and Mediterranean palm trees. www.grandhotelgardone.it

Visit D'Annunzio's house and gardens



Walk the short distance up the hill behind the Grand Hotel Gardone to the Vittoriale degli Italiani. This was the home and gardens of the celebrated and flamboyant Italian poet, soldier, ultra-nationalist and womaniser Gabriele D'Annunzio, who lived here like a decadent prince, receiving politicians, artists and lovers as his varied guests.

D'Annunzio (1863-1938) was a self-confessed '*animale di lusso*' (animal of luxury) and his residence – *La Priora* (Priory) – and its gardens are a lavish ode to aesthetics, eccentricity and the man's extensive military exploits during WWI. What you see here, in lacquered and gilded rooms crammed with statues, ornaments, instruments and other vintage memorabilia, is an eclectic and altogether staggering collection of some 10,000 bizarre objects that reflect the character of this extraordinary man.

Suspended from the ceiling in the indoor cinema is the plane that D'Annunzio himself flew during WWI! The gardens even contain a warship, the *Puglia*, somehow ensconced in the hillside, which you can board and explore. There is also an outdoor, Pompeii-inspired theatre big enough to accommodate 1,000 spectators which is used in the summer months for performances and concerts.

Book ahead here www.vittoriale.it to visit the house itself. There is no need to book if you only wish to visit the gardens.



This was the home and gardens of the celebrated and flamboyant Italian poet, soldier, ultra-nationalist and womaniser Gabriele D'Annunzio

FOR THE KIDS

► PARCO NATURA VIVA

Another of the large Lake Garda parks, and one the kids will love as well. Located at Pastrengo, a couple of miles east of Lazise, this massive 40 hectare park has much to offer. It includes:

► Parco Faunistico (Fauna Park)

This part has around 200 animals from all over the world. It's also involved in the conservation of rare plants which are in danger of extinction.

► Safari Park

This part of the park can only be visited by car or bus. The route is five miles long that winds through a large area of land where you can view many animals, especially from the Savannah area.

► Botanical Route

There is a huge variety of plants here in the landscaped hillside, from local ones to tropical plants in the greenhouse.

► Dinosaur Park

This is located in the Fauna Park and has life sized models of lots of dinosaurs. A sure hit with the kids.

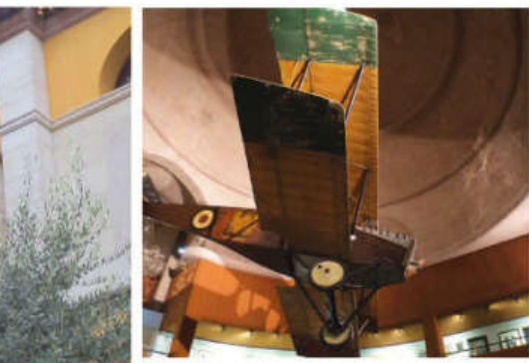
www.parconaturaviva.it



Stroll around the Heller Gardens

Trace your steps back down from the Vittoriale towards the Lake and you will come to the Heller Gardens. After the thunderous displays in the Vittoriale, these gardens are an altogether more gentle experience; the twinkly sound of trickling water is your only companion as you stroll around this oasis of tranquillity.

The gardens originally belonged to Arthur Hruska (1880-1971), a world renowned dentist and doctor from Czechoslovakia. He loved the climate on the Lake and began planning and planting between 1912-14. André Heller, a Viennese multimedia artist, bought the gardens in 1988 and opened them to the public in 1989, after transforming them in line with his own esoteric vision. He has combined the more than 3,000 plants, streams, ponds, waterfalls and man-made cliffs with artistic installations. Each twist and turn offers a different perspective



on the details, with dozens of statues and little people popping up unexpectedly in the rockeries. The climate on the Lake means oriental plants like bamboo grow alongside European tulips and alpine flowers. In spring the colours of the flowers in bloom are fantastic. Keep a look out for works of art by Keith Haring or Roy Lichtenstein.

Heller juxtaposes beauty with great ugliness, statues of the Buddha with gargoyle heads squirting water angrily at each other, and a gaping mouth exhaling fumes. It's playful, yet the message is clear: we have a complex relationship with our environment and we need to take care of it. www.hellergarden.com

MORE GARDENS...

➤ PARCO GIARDINO SIGURTÀ

These huge, stunning gardens, situated just five miles south of Peschiera, are considered to be in the top five in the world. Nearly 400 years old, the park covers a huge area of 560,000 square metres – more than enough to keep you busy for a day. The gardens are based around five flowering periods and there will be different plants to look at depending on when you visit. There's a huge variety of plant life, including more than 40,000 bushes, ponds with tropical fish, a herb garden, and a great lawn. This is the biggest of all the Lake Garda parks in terms of land area. www.sigurta.it



Visit Isola del Garda



Most people don't realise that there is an island on the lake, but there is, Isola del Garda, just off the pretty town of Salò. It's a short ride over from San Felice del Benaco and impossibly romantic as the boat pulls into a tiny cove of turquoise water. This is the private island of the Cavazza family, who have Russian and English heritage. Three of the Contessa's descendants still live here with their families. This speck of land is only 1,100m long and 60m at the widest point. You'll need to book ahead for the guided tour as the boat only goes a couple of times a week. Alberta, one of the great great grand-daughters

shows you round with great warmth and affection for her island home. The gardens are her pride and joy, reflecting her mixed heritage – English roses and hedgerows sit alongside palm trees, with orange, lemon and olive trees adding their colour and perfume throughout. www.isoladelgarda.com



WHERE TO EAT AND STAY

AI BEATI

Via More, 57/59

Località Beati, Garda

www.ristoranteaibeati.com

A short ride into the hills just outside Garda, but worth going the extra mile for. Perfect for special occasions and with romantic lake views. Camilla and Pier Francesco do a fantastic job with super, not-to-be missed desserts too.

IL PORTICETTO

Via Palestro, 1 – Bardolino

This is an elegant recently renovated restaurant right in the centre of Bardolino. There is something for even the most refined palate here, with meat and fish being especially good. They also serve up delicious pizzas.

CORTE SAN MARCO

Via Porta del Lion, 1 – Lazise

www.cortesanmarco.it

Family-run. Beautiful courtyard location, perfect for warm summer evenings. Friendly atmosphere, delicious *fritto misto* and other Mediterranean delicacies. They offer a great choice of wine too.

HOTEL CORTE VALIER

Via della Pergolana, 9 – Lazise

www.cortevalier.com

On the eastern side of the lake, a four-star, beautiful and relaxing hotel with magnificent facilities including wellness centre and outdoor and indoor pools. The rooms are spacious, contemporary and hi-tech.

HOTEL VILLA MADRINA

Via Paolo Veronese, 1 – Garda

www.villamadrina.it

A lovely and luxurious family-run hotel in Garda, with beautiful gardens and olive groves in a tranquil setting. Peaceful, friendly with perfect food.

PARC HOTEL GERMANO

Via Gardesana dell'Acqua, 10

Bardolino

www.parchotelgermano.org

Family friendly, relaxed four-star modern resort. Great views from the terrace for evening summer sunsets. Apartments are well-equipped, and some even have their own pool. There's a large outdoor pool area, and a heated indoor pool with whirlpool, and a wellness centre.

HOTEL MAXIMILIAN

Via Val di Sogno, 6 – Malcesine

www.hotelmaximilian.com

Easy walk into town, friendly staff and great food. A favourite with couples getting married in the castle in Malcesine as it is really not overly expensive for such a great lakeside location.

Enjoy Lemony Limone



I took a leisurely boat ride up the shoreline to Limone, a lovely way to enjoy the scenery on the Lake as the boat stops off at several other little harbour towns along the way.

As the boat approaches, you can make out the iconic wooden lemon terraces on the hillsides. Limone is all about citrus fruit production, a

commercial activity dating back to the 13th century. In the early part of the 19th century, Limone became rich from exporting vast amounts of citrus fruits to Germany, Poland and Russia. Now it's more of historical than commercial interest and there's a museum in the Castle up the hill, La Limonaia del Castel.

It's well worth the climb up to the lemon terraces to enjoy the sweeping views across the water and maybe indulge in a little limoncello on the way.

Limone sits towards the north of the west bank, where the lake thins out and you crane your neck upwards to the towering cliffs behind. The scent up in the lemon groves is divine, as rosemary and jasmine mingle with the fruity citrus aroma emanating from the terraces. www.visitlimonesulgarda.com

GARDA PROPERTY

► If you fall in love with one of the lovely villas around the lake, then Claudia Hebeda from Elite Homes can provide up-to-the-minute property advice on how to go about securing one. Claudia says Elite Homes prides itself on exercising extreme discretion whilst accessing the most elegant, luxury apartments and villas on offer around Garda and Verona. See here or more information www.elitehomes.it or email claudia.hebeda@elitehomes.it

Experience a cooking lesson at Le Gemme di Artemisia

On the east side of the lake, at Albisano di Torri del Benaco, I visited Andrea and Lara at their beautiful restaurant and cooking school, Le Gemme di Artemisia, Atelier del Gusto (www.legemmediartemisia.it) Andrea is a well-travelled and experienced chef, and he's around between March and the beginning of November for cooking lessons on the Lake. I spent a fun morning learning how to make pizza dough, ravioli, and even proper egg pasta which we cut into spaghetti and various other shapes, although I'm sure I was quite the clumsiest student he's ever had. The location is utterly charming with sweeping lake views, (quite distracting when you're trying to learn about pasta!) and Andrea and Lara are also utterly charming. They can tailor cooking lessons based on your needs and ability, from very basic to very advanced, from just one morning to a few days. You get a recipe folder and a certificate at the end of it and a CD of photos as a memento of your successes (or failings as in my case!). If you'd like to stay nearby, Lara's parents have a bed and breakfast a 10-minute walk away. It's only for two people at the most, so just ask Lara at legemmediartemisia@gmail.com for more information.



Get married in Malcesine Castle



It doesn't have to be just a dream. You really can get married in a fairytale castle on a lake. In the picturesque town of Malcesine, you can hire the Castello Scaligero, a declared National Monument dating back to the 1st century AD.

You can ski in Malcesine in the winter, go walking and paragliding, or take the Monte Baldo cable car ride that connects medieval Malcesine to the top of the mount. It's got a rotating cabin, and you fly above and over olive groves, and views of the dark blue satiny lake, to reach the flora and fauna in the Garden of Europe at the top. At a height of 1,800m, you can relax on the terrace overlooking the lake – and plan your wedding!

Italian Lakes Weddings is a small, personal wedding planning business offering beautiful weddings in many locations around the Lake, and with offices in the UK and Italy, it couldn't be easier. Sarah and Anna are on hand to talk you through and organise everything on your special day. From the ceremony, to music, refreshments, or boat cruises, anything is possible.

Sarah begins the planning in the UK and Anna takes over upon arrival in Italy. Anna stays with you on the day to make sure everything runs smoothly.

For more information go to www.italianlakesweddings.com or contact Sarah Beech, info@italianlakesweddings.com

☎ 01384 429616 or 07920 864145

It doesn't have to be just a dream. You really can get married in a fairytale castle on a lake. Sarah and Anna are on hand to talk you through everything



GETTING THERE

➤ Lorenza's trip to Lake Garda was organised courtesy of Selective Travel Abroad, specialising in Verona and Lake Garda. You can book accommodation, transfers, car hire excursions and the cooking course via Selective Travel Abroad.
☎ 020 3598 9402
www.selectivetravel.com

➤ Flights to Bergamo airport courtesy of Thomson Lakes and Mountains.

Thomson Lakes & Mountains offers a week's half board at the four-star Parc Hotel Germano in Bardolino from £991 per person (based on two sharing; save £250 per person) including flights from London Gatwick and transfers departing on 17 June 2015. Direct flights are available from all major UK airports.

☎ 020 8939 0740
www.thomsonlakes.co.uk

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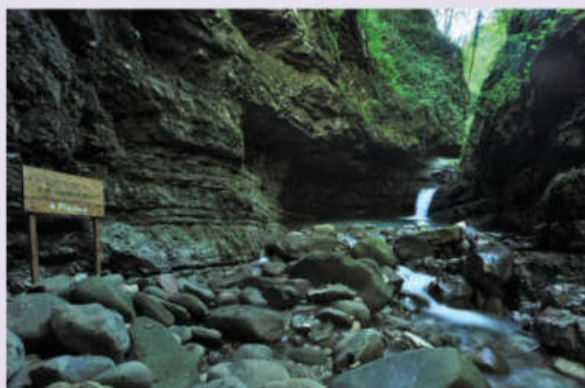
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TUSCAN SECRETS HIKING



Tuscany is a great place to choose for a hiking holiday and each region of Tuscany offers something unique. My preferred area is the most northern regional called Lunigiana. I use a small, family-run hotel in Pontremoli as my base. Pontremoli is a medieval town bridging the River Magra. This is a charming, authentic Tuscan town.

From here there are a number of rural walks available, ranging from following the Via Francigena, the ancient Pilgrims' Way, to walking in the Apennines. I'd suggest the Parco Nazionale dell'Appennino – www.parcoappennino.it. Here you can find

an interactive map and information of the visitors' centres, as well as what to look for in terms of geology, fauna and flora. The Park offers some challenging climbs, with spectacular views, as well as lower-level grasslands.

If you are planning an autumn holiday, a word of advice is to stay clear of any deer you may see, as you will be in the rutting season and stags can be aggressive. Autumn is also the best time for mushrooms and the Parco Appennino will be publishing a list of special events.

Lunigiana is steeped in history. Pontremoli was first settled around 1,000 BC and there is evidence available to see that was left by these ancient people. The region has a castle every few miles, many of which you can visit. There are numerous hilltop villages for you to explore, where you can find small restaurants offering exceptional food for amazing value for money and of course *Menu a Km 0!* www.tuscansecrets.com

*The Park offers
some challenging
climbs with
spectacular views*

VILLE TRÈS JOLIE LUXURY BED AND BREAKFAST

Walking in the mountains above Lake Como is a wonderful experience and luxury B&B Villa Très Jolie is the ideal starting point. We have selected some great walks which show the area off to its best! We walk up the mountain behind the

at the villa there is a masseur, the sauna, Turkish bath and whirlpool bath to relax your muscles. Walks are all personally guided by Dani and Giulio and our dogs in the cooler months when the weather is just right for walking. The walks

*We follow the Roman mule track through
villages with views around every corner*

villa, along the wooded zigzag mule track, through the alpine pastures, accompanied by the cow bells ringing in your ears and unbeatable high views of the lake. We follow the Roman mule track passing through unchanged old villages with views around every corner, through the vineyards up the Valtellina valley, walking past the old wine cellars, walks through the woods and also a chance for a wine-tasting meal at a local *enoteca*! Arriving back

are suitable for all levels and we also have tailor-made walks for groups or solos. New this year there is the use of the Vespa moped for a traditional Vespa ride around the lake.

CONTACT DETAILS

► VILLA TRÈS JOLIE
Luxury bed and breakfast on the shores of
Lake Como
☎ +39 347 256 5053
www.villatresjolie.com skype:villatresjolie





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Tel: 07704 136539
E-mail: info@aeolianadventures.co.uk

www.aeolianadventures.co.uk

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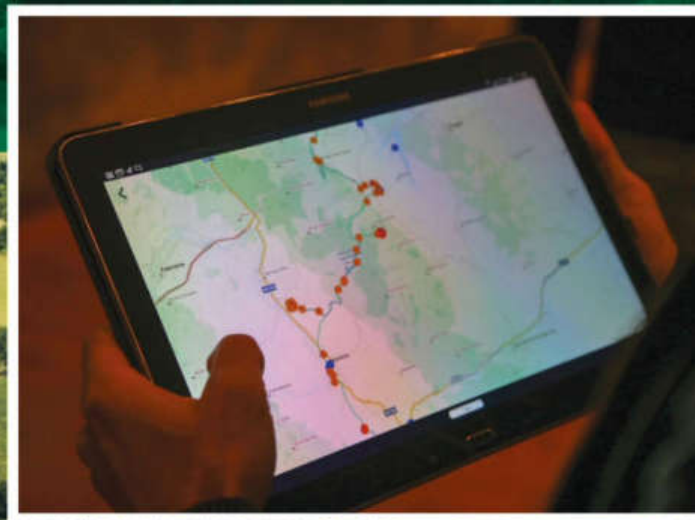
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Appy Travels in **LE MARCHE**

Chris Allsop tries out a new app that opens up Le Marche's stunning hinterland – as well as guiding you to some of the best wines in the region...



*Accompanying the recommendations are videos, music
and the like created by the artists*

*The Borette agriturismo on the edge of the
Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini*



Tasting at the Aurora vineyard and agriturismo

Valentina is lost. It's late at night and she's transferring me to my *agriturismo* buried deep in Le Marche's southerly Ascoli Piceno region. Admittedly, some of the roads are not the most obvious, nor the signage overly clear (later I find that this is something of a trend in the Marche interior).

I wait by her Panda as she speaks on the phone, fireflies spiralling out of the darkness. Thunder cracks somewhere nearby and I look with alarm to my host. Happily, Valentina is smiling. "Just a little further," she says. Thank the stars for mobile phones...

And now there's yet another reason to delight in your smartphone: the Bioculture project. Masterminded by Federico Bomba, a theatre director and *marchigiano*, Bomba devised the project as a way to marry up tourist euros with Italy's struggling young artists. Securing a grant, Bomba assembled a fellowship of artists from different disciplines (including up-and-coming writer and spoken

word artist Rachel Rose Reid from London) and they tramped for 150 miles across Le Marche's rural hinterland recording, researching, and creating art as they went.

The product is the Bioculture app: a 19-day itinerary of linked walks chock-full of suggestions and sparky site descriptions. Accompanying the recommendations are videos, music and the like created by the artists and accessed through the app to accompany each stop; all to add lush artsy depth to your tours.

TERROIR MARCHE

My Bioculture-powered journey begins at family-run Fiorano, the *agriturismo* and celebrated organic winery where Valentina eventually dropped me for the night. Run by the warm and welcoming Paola and Paolo, Fiorano produces extra virgin olive oil alongside its delicious Sangiovese, Montepulciano, and Pecorino (a complex indigenous white grape variety) wines. ➤

Federico Bomba assembled a fellowship of artists from different disciplines, and they tramped across Le Marche's rural hinterland recording, researching, and creating art as they went



A backstreet in Camerino



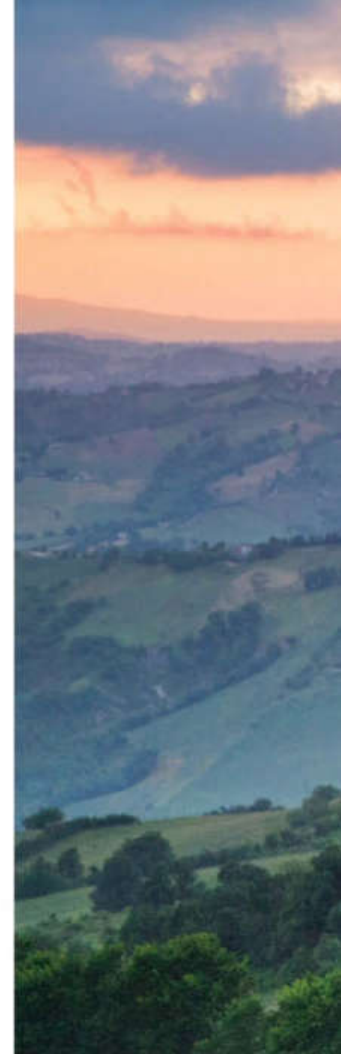
An orchid disguised as bees in Smerillo



Offida, a town of smiles, parties and lace



A lace coaster in the Offida Lace Museum



Leaving Aurora with the scent of honeysuckle adrift on the breeze, we drive to the nearby town of Offida



Traditional lace-working technique with bobbins

They couldn't have found a nicer spot. Despite some residual rain in the wake of the night's storms, I stand for five minutes on the veranda of their beautifully restored farmhouse, soaking up the vista of vines swirling gently around what feels like your own private valley. This whole rumpled southern area is like this: small swells of agricultural land, each topped with its own farm or villa, like a boutique Tuscany.

Fiorano is also a founding member of Terroir Marche – a fledgling consortium of top quality organic winemakers that's a collaborator in the Bioculture project (you'll find profiles of winemakers and their organic and biodynamic wines helpfully programmed into the app). I meet the entire group at a delicious tasting hosted by Aurora – Terroir Marche's leading light and one of the first organic winemakers in Italy. When Aurora started out, as five idealists working on a shared dream, they learned organic farming by

constantly ringing up a professor in Turin and describing how the grapes looked over the phone.

LACE-MAKING IN OFFIDA

Leaving Aurora, my veins warm with wine (you can't spit them all) and the scent of honeysuckle adrift on the breeze, we drive to the nearby town of Offida. As you enter the town, you're greeted by a bronze statue of three generations of women making the lace that Offida has been famous for since the 1400s. A drink's coaster made of Offida lace would make an excellent present if you've a spare €800 lying around in the lace kitty.

Offida is also known as 'The Smiling Town', apparently for its affinity for partying. "We like parties," explains my ludicrously dapper guide, Valerio. "If there are no parties, we invent them." These partiers are also practising pyromaniacs – Offida's medieval *carnevale* celebrations are (in)famous for their paganistic torch swirling. Perhaps that's how the townsfolk of yore evicted the corrupt monks holed up in the imposing Santa



The view across the hills from Smerillo

Maria della Rocca, the remarkable church-cum-fortress on the town's outer edge...

Visiting the extensively frescoed church, I watch a short, amusing video – set within the building – created by two of Bioculture's artists. It's one in a series in the app in which the video artist Fabrizio Carotti asks a local (in this case, Valerio) to pose for a portrait; unbeknownst to the hapless subject, the camera is actually set to video, and performer Simona Sala creeps into the background.

TASTING NATURE IN SMERILLO

As we drive to our next destination, the hilltop hamlet of Smerillo, I begin to wonder whether I am also part of an elaborate artwork staged using contradictory road signage, with Valentina as a gentle Italian version of Sacha Baron-Cohen. Nope, it's just the countryside.

Smerillo is worth the effort. Mounted upon ochre sandstone cliffs, the town commands extraordinary panoramas over the region (some ruins remain of its

previously significant medieval castle), and on a clear day you can see clean to the Adriatic. Even better, La Conca is there: an agriturismo run by a Slow Food-affiliated Romanian cook named Mirella who forages for ingredients. The dinner she created was like something from a fairy story – after ever more remarkable courses, the gluttonous hero is eventually transformed into a pig. Chia seed with soft cheese and ginger in a parmesan cup. Shuffleboard-sized ricotta and sage ravioli of the most perfect construction. An intoxicating jam for the fresh pecorino made from rose petals. Lightly battered sprigs of rosemary. On and on it went.

As we eat, Federico tells me more about the hike, how after three days the mostly unprepared group of artists were physically beaten. The weather wasn't perfect, and Le Marche's terrain undulates remorselessly (except along the oversubscribed beaches).

"I began to ask myself: was this such a good idea," he says. But after five days the group adapted and the

WHERE TO STAY

FIORANO AGRITOURISM

Contrada Fiorano, 19 – Cossignano

☎ +39 0735 98446

www.agrifiorano.it

Fiorano is a beautiful family-run organic farm and *agriturismo*, as well as being a co-founder of Terroir Marche. For the past 12 years, Paola and Paolo have welcomed visitors who wish to spend the night as well as taste and learn a little about its Rosso Piceno, Pecorino, and Sangiovese wines.

LE BORETTE

Contrada Schito, 450 – Samano

☎ +39 0733 657487

www.leborette.it

A restored farmhouse in the remote Monti Azzurri Mountain Community, this *agriturismo* offers elegant rooms in the *arte povera* style. Breakfast includes owner Arnaldo's homemade jams, as well as a delicious regional cake called *ciambellone* (spiked with just the right amount of *mistra* spirit for first thing in the morning). Also available is a paved courtyard with a large barbecue, and a swimming pool.

OSTERIA OPHIS

Corso Serpente Aureo, 54/B – Offida

☎ +39 0736 889920

www.osteriaophis.com

Osteria Ophis is run by Michelin-starred chef and Offida local Daniele Citeroni Maurizi. Housed in a former stable, its stone walls part of an 18th-century noble residence, Ophis offers not only traditional Italian dishes but also creative cuisine inspired by regional recipes. Slow Food to the core, the menu comprises only locally sourced, seasonal ingredients.

LA CONCA BIO AGRITOURISM

Località Cerasola, 44 – Smerillo

☎ +39 0734 79387

www.cibibuoni.it

Presided over by the miraculous Mirela, Slow Food member La Conca offers rooms for the night and incredible food – all for an extremely affordable price. When the weather's good, dine in the spacious garden surrounded by apple trees and roses. La Conca is also superbly located for forays into the *Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini*.

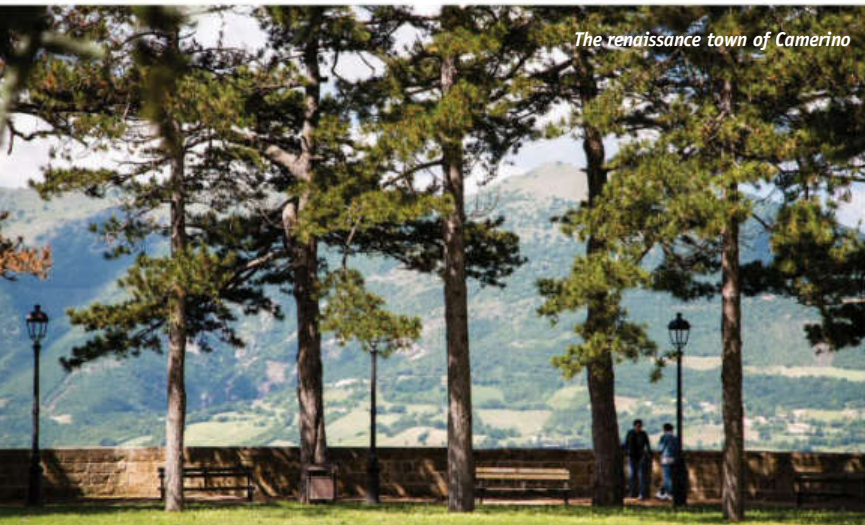
PIETRA MAULA

Località Stroppigliosi, 9 – Castelraimondo

☎ +39 329 5877914

www.pietramaula.it

Taking over an entire small village, this well-appointed *agriturismo* is beautifully sited and overflowing with colourful rose bushes. The traditional cuisine, based on seasonal home grown (or reared) ingredients, is expertly (and creatively) cooked. Put your full trust in the young waitress/sommelier's wine choices.



The renaissance town of Camerino



Beneath the floor here lie the remains of a Roman market



Beekeeping is an integral part of any ecosystem's balance

High above the surrounding country, Camerino's parks are like pine-scented floating platforms from which to soak up the views

three-week hike became a bonding experience, “a kind of performance, not a hike”.

We say goodbye to Mirella and her hospitable team, and drive into the shadow of the Sibellini mountains, passing towns with romantic names like Amandola (trans: while loving her) and honest names like Rustici (trans: rustics); first along a winding rural road, then on an unmetalled track, then a slim gravelled path, and finally to arrive at a friendly old man in a cap and a denim shirt waiting up for us – our host, Arnaldo.

When we awake, in the Borette *agriturismo*, which is set on the edge of the *Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini*, we're greeted by a lemon tree-framed view of verdant mountains to accompany Arnaldo's homemade apple jam and some *ciambellone* (a delicious regional cake spiked with a local eau de vie called *mistra*). A video on the app shows Arnaldo standing for a portrait, blissfully unaware of his being

upstaged as Simone mucks around on a ladder behind him.

THE ARTISTS AND ELCITO
En route to meet the artists at the remote hamlet of Elcito, we stop by the renaissance town of Camerino (home to Italy's second oldest university) high above the surrounding country, its parks like pine-scented floating platforms from which to soak up the views. At an organic bee farm – the Mountain Beekeepers Cooperative – Federico plays an engrossing app-based short story by Reid. The tranquillity is soon forgotten as we bump up a neglected road into the mountains.

When we step out of the car, it's significantly cooler than when we were listening to Reid ten minutes earlier. Poppies flare out of the tall grass and a cuckoo's call echoes around the empty hills. Elcito really is out on its own, an hour's drive from the nearest shops, with a set of gorgeous Le Marche views all its own. It currently has only one

full-time resident, a twinkly-eyed mountain guide called Giovanni.

The artists are waiting in what must be the local park – a rectangle of grass just large enough for a cramped game of croquet. Talking about the project, visual artist Giacomo Giovannetti described how the pain of the hike broke down their artistic egos, helping them produce “instinctual art”. Giacomo also uncovered a lost long aunt in one of the villages they visited.

As night falls – the stars bright in this remote spot – the conversation continues over dinner in the home of Giuliana, one of the part-time residents of Elcito, who is fierce about preserving her birthplace as a living village. It's an enjoyable evening – these artists are fine company in deepest Le Marche, in person or on the phone. ■

INFORMATION

► BIOCULTURE

You can download the Bioculture app onto Android 4.4 (and higher) and Apple iOS devices. For more information go to www.bioculture.it



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A typical rural estate found in Mezaia, a verdant and peaceful countryside district about 6 km from Arzachena. The farm stretches over about 6.5 hectares bristling with centuries-old olive trees, fragrant, lush vegetation and wonderful granite boulders. It is also worth mentioning the lovely stream running along the border. On the land sit two beautiful stone cottages in needs of renovation close to each other, covering approximately 130sqm.

Price €300,000

Contact info@liveinsardinia.com www.liveinsardinia.com



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info@myvillainsardinia.it www.myvillainsardinia.it

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€250,000-€500,000

CASA LUCIA, 3 BEDROOMS BEACH VILLA, FRUTTI D'ORO, SW SARDINIA

Gorgeous front beach detached villa halfway between Cagliari and Pula. The property is sold fully furnished and the reason for the sale is the relocation of the current owner to northern Italy by his current employee. The villa is a recent built and is presented in excellent conditions. It also has the rare benefit of direct access to the beach as well as of stunning sea views from both floors. Currently the main residency of its owner and therefore fully equipped.

Price €370,000 Contact info@myvillainsardinia.it ☎ +39 347 926 4309 ☎ 07 950 207 161 www.myvillainsardinia.it – My Villa in Sardinia also specialises in rentals, visit the website for details



€250,000-€500,000

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Small complex of apartments and villas currently been built with pool by the gorgeous beaches of Chia, on the southwest coast of Sardinia. The complex will be composed of 5 units in total, each on two levels and all with fantastic sea views of the sea. All the properties are been built according to the latest planning regulations and to a very high standard with the possibility to choose some of the materials and to personalize the interior of the properties.

Price €270,000 Contact info@myvillainsardinia.it

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PAST ITALIA!



Image © iStock

LA VILLA D'ESTE

Water is the theme here; the garden's structure revolves around a long climb up a slow hill, during which all manner of aqueous artifice appears before you, at times gushing, gurgling, spraying, splashing and spitting by you as you stroll...

Whenever you see a gardening show on television that tells you that your little plot can never be truly complete until you have a water feature somewhere (thank you Charlie Dimmock), this is where that idea comes from. For some centuries a favourite of tourists seeking to escape the summer heat in Rome, the garden at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli (it was commissioned by Cardinal

Ippolito d'Este towards the end of the 16th century) is one of a series of extravagant Renaissance parks in the Roman campagna – and perhaps the most theatrical of them all.

This view is of the famous 100 fountains (*i Cento Fontane*). Other, non-water related, diversions include a scale model of Ancient Rome and a number of secluded grottoes wherein diverse assignations 'tween tourists far from their betrothed might or might not occur. ■



GIORGIO ARMANI

MAN OF STYLE

He invented the power suit and was one of the first designers to embrace the best of celebrity culture.
Gilly Turney celebrates 40 years of Giorgio Armani style at the Armani/Silos Museum...



Photography © Giorgio Armani unless otherwise stated

Giorgio Armani is one Italy's most famous and prolific fashion designers. His relaxed, chic style of dressing is a favourite among women and men around the world. From company directors to sports stars, royalty to Hollywood, the understated designs of Armani are, for many, the clothing of choice. Now he has been immortalised in Italian culture with the opening of a magnificent museum celebrating his 40th anniversary in fashion.

Devoted entirely to his life's work, the Armani/Silos Museum on Milan's Via Bergognone is a stunning, modern, simplistic architectural space – a testament to

way, because fashion, which seems to want to live in an eternal present, needs to reflect on itself and its own roots in order to face the future. Through this process of reflection, we see how fashion accompanies and often anticipates important social changes. Remembering what we were like in the past can help us understand what we might become in the future."

FIRST EXHIBITION

This first exhibition, featuring clothes from 1980 to the present day, reveals the designer's influence on and importance to fashion across the decades, something he shows no sign of relinquishing. Turning 81 last July, his energy and inspiration

From his early days in Milan it was obvious that Armani was a unique and gifted talent

the designer's love of minimalism and style. Originally a granary owned by Nestlé ("I decided to call it Silos because this building used to store food, which is, of course, essential for life. For me, just as much as food, clothes are also a part of life," explains Armani) the designer conceived and oversaw the total renovation of the 1950s building himself.

FASHION & ARCHITECTURE

A fusion of fashion and architecture with a concrete façade and ribbon of windows around the top, 'like a crown', some 600 garments and 200 accessories are elegantly displayed over the stark, three-storey, basilica-inspired interior, a huge open space of grey concrete floors, black ceilings, stone staircases and a massive, high, square atrium.

Selecting the outfits for the exhibition was both a process of reflection and one of looking to the future, says Armani. "Setting up Armani/Silos, deciding what to exhibit and how, focusing on the themes that best represent a way of thinking and a style – all this helped me look back on my 40-year career in a passionate but balanced

are as strong as ever. He launched a new women's 'classic' collection this year, New Normal – "It will show how I think today's women should dress. The idea is to start from classic designs to create a new classic. It's a collection meant to last, which will be renewed as we go but will remain rooted in classic style." In September he will show at Milan Fashion Week, the twice-yearly event that is such an important date in the fashion year.

From his early days as a fledgling freelance menswear fashion designer in Milan it was obvious that Armani was a unique and gifted talent. He caused a revolution in fashion and changed the way people dressed forever when he first revealed his chic, unstructured styles in the 1970s.

CAREER IN FASHION

It was chance that led Armani to a career in fashion – he had set out to work in medicine. He was born on July 11th, 1934, into a humble family in Piacenza, during a difficult time in Italian history. The middle child of a shipping manager, Armani, together with his older brother Sergio and younger sister ➤

Giorgio and A-list client and celebrity friends – from top to bottom: Cate Blanchett, Chris Pine, Tina Turner, Glenn Close, Hilary Swank and Leonardo di Caprio





LIMITED EDITION

COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

To celebrate his anniversary and the opening of Armani/Silos, a limited edition commemorative stamp was issued by the Ministry of Economic Development. Featuring Armani's sketch of the Silos only 800,000 were printed.

Rosanna, he experienced first-hand the hardships of war. Some of his friends were killed during Allied bombings. "We were poor and life was tough," he recalls. As an escape he turned to theatre and cinema; the cinema in Milan was a refuge and he fell in love with the idealised beauty of the Hollywood stars.

He attended the local public school and at an early age became interested in anatomy, making dolls out of mud with a coffee bean hidden inside. This fascination with the human form led to two years medical study at the University of Milan, before he left to complete his military service.

It was while he was on leave that he experienced his first taste of fashion when, through a friend, he found a job at La Rinascente, a

Milan department store, initially assisting the photographer, then designing the windows. After being discharged from the Army, Armani dropped out of university and went back to work at La Rinascente, this time as a salesman in the menswear department, where he stayed for seven years, learning about fashion design and marketing.

In 1964, and without any formal training, he joined the staff of haute couturier Nino Cerruti as a designer. But it was meeting a young architect, Sergio Galeotti, in the late '60s that was to have a profound effect on his life. They became

unstructured 'masculine' jacket for women. As soft and as simple as the men's, and made in traditional menswear fabrics, it was an alternative to the classic French tailoring and flower child fashions of the time. It freed up how women dressed from then on and Armani joined French designers Paul Poiret and Coco Chanel as an emancipator of women's fashion. "My vision was clear: I believed in getting rid of the artifice of clothing. I believed in neutral colours."

The '80s brought international recognition when he invented the power suit. Worn by Richard Gere

It was at the Sala Bianca show in Florence in 1973 that Armani really created a stir

personal and professional partners, a relationship that was to last until Galeotti's untimely death in 1985.

FASHION DESIGNER

Encouraged by Galeotti he left Cerruti in 1970 to become a freelance fashion designer and consultant for many well-known menswear fashion houses. It was at the prestigious Sala Bianca fashion show in Florence in 1973 that Armani really created a stir with his new-look bomber jackets, in leather treated as a regular, everyday fabric. It was this penchant for using materials in unexpected ways and styles that became a defining characteristic of his genius.

Encouraged by his freelance success and inspired by Galeotti, Armani decided to create his own label and in 1975 the pair started their own company, Giorgio Armani S.p.A.. That July he caused a revolution in fashion with the launch of his unlined, unconstructed man's jacket. A more natural, loose fit, and in a subtle, colour palette, it marked a major departure from the traditional, made-to-measure stuffy suits of the '60s and the wild boho looks of the '70s hippy. It was an immediate success and heralded a new form of tailoring.

Three months later he was to repeat this success with an

in the film *American Gigolo*, it made him a household name in America and marked the beginning of a long collaboration with cinema. He has since designed for over 100 films and worked with TV, theatre, opera and dance. He provided much of the wardrobe for the hit television series *Miami Vice*, (1984-89), starring Don Johnson, during a period when wearing Armani became a symbol of success for many business professionals and represented an era of economic boom.

Exquisitely tailored for men and women, the power suit, with broad padded shoulders and widened lapels, was inspired by the glamour of 1940s Hollywood. The success of *American Gigolo* led to a roll call of stars wearing his designs to red carpet events – Michelle Pfeiffer, Jodie Foster, George Clooney, Penelope Cruz, Leonardo di Caprio, John Travolta, Glenn Close, to name just a few – and he is still the favoured designer among A-list celebrities today.

GLOBAL BRAND

Expansion into America gave the pair the opportunity to grow the brand globally. With the opening of Giorgio Armani Corporation in New York they introduced new product lines under the Giorgio Armani name – Le Collezioni, Underwear

GIORGIO ARMANI'S AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

It is impossible to list all the awards and accolades bestowed on Giorgio Armani, there have been so many during his brilliant career, but here is a short list of highlights...

- Commendatore Ordine al Merito della Repubblica (Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy)
- Grand Ufficiale Ordine al Merito della Repubblica (Grand Officer) Italy's highest award
- Legion d'Honneur, presented to him by then French President Nicolas Sarkozy
- Lifetime Achievement Award for menswear, art and fashion from the Council of Fashion Designers of America
- Dino Ferrari award for being the most renowned fashion designer in the world

- Leonardo Award for representing 'Italian Quality' worldwide from Italian President Giorgio Napolitano
- Best Designer at GQ's Men of the Year Awards 2010
- Elle Style Award Valencia
- Honorary Doctorate from London's Royal College of Art
- Honorary Degrees from Milan's Accademia di Brera, Politecnico University of Milan, and Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London

IN ADDITION TO THIS, HE HAS...

- Served as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees
- Been inaugurated into the Rodeo Drive 'Walk of Style' for his pioneering work in bringing the worlds of fashion and cinema together

and Swimwear, and accessories, and launched diffusion lines Armani Junior, Armani Jeans, and Emporio Armani, the latter a more youthful, stylish brand at an affordable price.

The death of Galeotti from Aids in 1985 was a great personal and professional loss to Armani. Assuming all business duties as well as designing he became sole owner, which he remains today, and has proved himself as great a leader as designer, expanding his empire into haute couture (Giorgio Armani Prive launched in 2005 in response to clients' requests for exclusive bespoke tailoring), interiors, make-up, books, hotels and restaurants. His products are sold in some 500 exclusive shops and major department stores worldwide.

A confirmed bachelor, vegetarian, teetotaler and non-smoker, Armani is very close to his siblings and their children – indeed his sister and nieces work in the company. He is a great sports fan and supports Inter Milan, is President of the Olimpia Milano basketball team, and has designed costumes for both the England and Italian national football teams, Chelsea Football Club, Italy's uniforms for the 2012 London Summer Olympics and the Italian flag bearers' outfits at the 2006 Turin Winter Olympics opening ceremony. He also created the EA7 range a brand inspired by Ukrainian footballer Andriy Shevchenko, who was then playing for AC Milan and wore the number 7 jersey.

That Armani is loved and adored by his clientele was much in evidence on the opening night of Armani/Silos earlier this year, when stars of Hollywood, stage and screen, turned out en masse to celebrate with the designer at a glittering gala opening. Wearing their favourite Armani designs from across the years it was a fitting tribute to a truly visionary man and his enduring fashion legacy. ■

ARMANI/SILOS

Armani/Silos is open to the public on
Tues, Weds, Fri, Sun 11am-8pm; Thurs, Sat
11am-10pm
www.armanisilos.com



1



2



3

MY FAVOURITE ARMANI LOOKS

1 Gold silk gown, a la Katharine Hepburn, worn by Julia Roberts at the Academy Awards 2004

2 Digital print iridescent green full skirt

3 Softest Red leather jacket with frilled hem

4 Plunging black silk evening dress

5 Grey suit worn by George Clooney for his wedding to Amal Alamuddin 2014

6 Relaxed tailoring: Grey trouser suit

7 Prom Dress with painterly watercolour fur coat

8 Cropped ankle length trouser suit in dove grey and ice blue



8



7



6



4



5

DISCOVER ITALIA!

VAL DI NOTO

Walking Through History

The Val di Noto, rich in olive oil and wine estates, and the setting for Sicilian author Andrea Camilleri's *Montalbano* detective stories, is also the location of Sicily's finest Baroque towns. **Rosalind Ormiston** explores...

Four hundred years ago, in 1693, between 9 and 11 January, nearly 60 cities, towns and villages in southern Sicily were destroyed or nearly demolished by three severe earthquakes. Nearly 100,000 people died. A report of the catastrophe was published by P. Alessandro Burgos in *Philosophical Transactions* (1693), telling of the tragic loss of life and the destruction of the buildings, so terrible that their inhabitants sought refuge in the fields.

What did not get destroyed was the spirit of the people who survived. New towns were created, either on the ruins of the originals, or close to them. Today, these towns are treasured for their architecture, recognised as the final flourish of the Baroque in Europe.

People worldwide know these honey-coloured masterpieces, even if they have never visited Sicily, because the region is the location for the globally popular television series *Il Commissario Montalbano* (*Inspector Montalbano*). Local companies accommodate demand for tours of the locations used in the series – mainly in Scicli, Ragusa, Modica and Noto – and for Commissario Montalbano's house



Balcony at the Palazzo Nicolaci Villadorata

People worldwide know these honey-coloured masterpieces

(where one can stay), which was described in the first book, *The Shape of the Water* (1994), as “a small house right on the beach” at Porto Empedocle Vigàta, the birthplace of author Andrea Camilleri. (‘Vigàta’ was added to its name in 2003, in honour of the author and the fictional town he created.)

In 2002 UNESCO gave World Heritage support to eight towns in this region, including Scicli, Ragusa, Modica and Noto. All

ARCHITECTURAL HIGHLIGHT

► PALAZZO NICOLACI DI VILLADORATA, NOTO

This beautiful *palazzo* – open to the public – was designed between 1737–65 for Prince Giacomo Nicolaci, with the help of several architects, including Gagliardi, his student Vincenzo Sinatra and a local Jesuit priest and architect called Francesco Maria Sortino.

They created a 90-room palace, the interior informed by French and Italian design. The frescoed ceiling of the ballroom, filled with mythological creatures, identifies the interests of Giacomo, an aristocratic intellectual with a vast library informing his many pursuits including history, mythology, astronomy and archaeology.

Outside, a calming inner courtyard with customary well leads out to the ceremonial entrance and the building's street façade, famed for its richly-decorated balconies and windows, a sign of the high social status of the owner. These are said to be the most beautiful balconies in the world.



The Nicolaci family were not from Noto but made their wealth from the local tuna fishing industry. The iconography of the various animals and objects portrayed on the corbels of the wrought iron balconies symbolises the family's heritage – mermaids for their sea trade, lions for the solidity and strength of the family, children's faces for its longevity and prosperity.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

► FRATELLI APRILE OLIVE OIL ESTATE

Fratelli Aprile Estate and Olive Groves, Contrada Sant'Agata, Scicli

☎ +39 0932 833828

info@fratelliaprile.it

www.fratelliaprile.it

On the outskirts of Scicli are the renowned olive oil producers Fratelli Aprile. A perfect way to understand the agrarian heritage of Sicily is to have a tour of the olive groves here – there are some 2,800 trees on the estate – and to sample the exquisite varieties of olive oil (a favourite is the spicy 274° with a sweet almond and herb aftertaste.) The method of tasting is akin to wine-tasting and enables you to appreciate on the palate the subtle differences in the varieties of organically produced olive oil. The Aprile brothers will make it a happy, memorable experience. The family welcomes visitors. They make and sell their own wine and pasta too.

► PLANETA WINE ESTATES

Cantina Buonivini, Noto

☎ + 39 0925 1955460

winetour@planeta.it

www.facebook.com/planetawinery

www.planeta.it

For those touring by car it is easy to reach one of the Planeta Wine Estates. There are five in total, each in different regions of Sicily, each set up to cultivate particular grape varieties. They offer tours, in English and Italian, of the wineries and vineyards, as well as wine tastings and cookery courses. A few kilometres from Modica, Ragusa and Syracuse is the estate's Cantina Buonivini, opened in 1998, with its first harvest in 2003. One can vacation here too in the winery's *case sparse*, red-painted cottages sprinkled across the landscape. The wine is cultivated in an innovative underground 'invisible winery', an ecological plan to preserve the landscape above, which is dotted with almond and carob trees amongst the vines.

► MULINO AD ACQUA – MUSEO CAVALLO D'ISPICA (WATERMILL MUSEUM)

Via Cava d'Ispica, 89 – Modica (Near the Parco Archeologico)

☎ +39 0932 771048

www.cavallodispica.it

An 18th-century water mill on the outskirts of Modica still produces fine flour and gives tours to visitors of its museum, the *Museo Cavallo d'Ispica*. Of special interest is the original living quarters of the miller's house, hewn from the rock. It gives insight into how rock dwellings were created and lived in. Well worth a visit. Open every day.



were in existence in pre-medieval times, all centred around a castle and monasteries. All suffered in the earthquakes. Now their architecture is predominantly gorgeously overblown 18th-century Baroque.

The chief architect and engineer for the grand design 'of the city of Noto and its valley' was Rosario Gagliardi (1698-1762), born in Syracuse and only five years old when the earthquakes took place but the instigator of new urban planning, including the vertical layering of buildings to fit the hilly landscape. He excelled in Noto, which is recognised as the finest Baroque town in Sicily.

Its architecture is dramatic, flamboyant and engaging. A Baroque building never allows the eye to settle on one aspect of it; it is full of movement, excess and decoration. In every direction in Noto one sees eye-catching architecture and decorative detail, such as the sumptuous stone decoration supporting the balconies

of Palazzo Nicolaci di Villadorata. Here, angels, horses and fantasy creatures look down on visitors walking up Via Nicolaci, with the elliptical façade of Chiesa di Montevergine overpowering the street end.

PROPORTION AND BALANCE

The original town destroyed in the earthquakes is six miles away and known as Noto Antica. The 'new' Noto has a harmonious identity of proportion and balance, the essence of which is the square grid street plan. Gagliardi's masterplan included the long main street regularly intersected with a church and a large *piazza*, joint religious and secular meeting points for inhabitants should earthquakes strike again. A walk along the main street Corso Vittorio Emanuele reveals the beauty of Gagliardi's constructions, particularly Chiesa Madre San Nicolò, the cathedral rising dramatically above Piazza Municipio. In 1996, a crack in the

dome, left unrepaired, resulted in its collapse. The dome was remade and the building restored, cleaned to perfection, and reopened in 2007. Directly below the cathedral is Palazzo Ducezio, the municipal town hall with a sumptuous 'Hall of Mirrors' within (open to visitors). An architectural quirk of Noto resulted in the 1840s, when it was necessary to lower the level of part of the main street to accommodate carriages. It has left some buildings 'in air', such as the Chiesa di Santa Chiara and its side fountain suspended above the ground.

An hour's drive west from Noto is Scicli, cloistered between two valleys. Troglodyte caves, known as *Le Grotte di Chiafura*, can be seen on

Clockwise from top left: Original cooking utensils and facilities on display at the Watermill Museum in Modica; backstreet in Modica; Via Mormina Penna, Scicli; la passeggiata in Modica

GETTING THERE

► BY PLANE

Fly to Comiso or Catania. There are direct flights to Catania from Birmingham, Bristol, Dublin, Gatwick, Luton and Manchester. Comiso is connected with Dublin and Stansted.

Via Mormina Penna, a pedestrianised street with 'Montalbano's HQ'



the southern hill leading to Chiesa di San Matteo. This area, the oldest part of the town, was occupied as cave-dwellings until the 1950s. At the heart of Scicli one finds a plethora of Baroque. Not to be missed is the honey-coloured Palazzo Beneventano, on Via Duca d'Aosta, described by art historian Anthony Blunt as the most beautiful in Sicily. Set at the corner of a quiet backstreet intersection, the building is richly decorated with elaborate cornices. Ornate, curved wrought-iron balconies are supported by stone brackets depicting animal grotesques, masks (similar to Ancient Sicilian-Greek comedy theatre masks), and human caricatures, a stunning example of the stonemasons' creativity.

A short distance away is Via Mormina Penna, a pedestrianised street with Baroque religious and civic buildings, pleasant cafés, restaurants, and 'Montalbano's HQ', in reality *Il Municipio*, the Town Hall, which one can visit. Close by,

the small church of Saint John the Evangelist houses a 17th-century painting, both unique and complex. *Cristo in gonnella*, (also known as *Il Cristo di Burgos*), is a Crucifixion depiction of Christ wearing a long white sacerdotal skirt from waist to ankles. It is linked to a skin-covered sculpture of Christ in Burgos, Spain.

A 15-minute drive from Scicli is the town of Modica, built on its 1693 ruins. It is defined by Modica Alta (Upper Modica) overlooking Modica Bassa (Lower Modica), nestling below. For sightseeing, start at the majestic Chiesa di San Giorgio, with four monumental flights of 250 steps, from which one has a panoramic view of Modica below. The church was rebuilt from 1702 by Gagliardi, a masterpiece that would become a prototype design for churches in the region. From here the road winds gently down passing the intimate 11-12th century Chiesa Rupestre di San Nicolò Inferiore (Via Grimaldi),

PLACES TO STAY AND EAT

► PALAZZO FAILLA

Via Blandini, 5 – Modica

☎ +39 0932 941059

www.palazzofailla.it

A stunning boutique hotel in Modica Alta, above the Church of San Giorgio.

► TORRE DEL SUD HOTEL

Corso Sandro Pertini, 42 – Modica

A modern hotel convenient for all the main cultural and architectural landmarks.

☎ +39 0932 762120

www.torredelsud.it

► TORRE DON VIRGILIO COUNTRY HOTEL

Strada Provinciale Rocciola Scrofani, 260 Modica

☎ +39 0932 909116

www.torredonvirgilio.it

Owner Anselmo Minutoli welcomes guests to his country retreat, which dates to 1600 and was originally a fortified farmhouse.

► VALATA MINUSA COUNTRY RESORT

Strada Provinciale Rocciola Scrofani, 207 Modica

☎ +39 0932 185 0256

www.valataminusa.it

Francesco Frasca Polara's concern lies just down the road from the Torre Don Virgilio, between beach and town.

► ANTICO CONVENTO DEI CAPPUCINI

Via dei Giardini, 1 – Ragusa Ibla

☎ +39 347 147 2915

www.antic conventoibla.it

A food and wine school, a didactical restaurant (Cenobio), and a hotel.

► GRAND HOTEL SOFIA

Via Confalonieri, Noto

☎ +39 0931 183 5057

www.grandhotelsofia.it

Elegance and charm in the heart of the Baroque, and 3km from the beach.

ESCORTED TOURS

► The Contented Traveller 'Baroque Sicily' 8-day tour, includes Ragusa, Modica, Noto, Scicli, Syracuse and Ortigia www.thecontentedtraveller.com

► Archers Holidays 'Highlights of Sicily' includes Syracuse and Noto www.archersdirect.co.uk/holiday/highlights-of-sicily

► TravelSphere 'Secret Sicily' includes Modica, Ragusa, Scicli, Syracuse and Ortigia www.travelsphere.co.uk/en-gb/tours/secret-sicily

► Saga 'Seriously Sicily' includes Noto, and Ragusa province travel.saga.co.uk/destinations/europe/italy/sicily/seriously-sicily



WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

► NTE MURIANA

Piazza Corrado Rizzone, 39 – Modica

☎ +39 0932 948281

A family-run *osteria* serving delicious rustic regional food and wines, with regular patronage from the local cast of *Il Commissario Montalbano* television series. Ideal for lunch or supper, and perfect after sightseeing.

► FATTORIE DELLE TORRI

Vico Napolitano, 14 – Modica

☎ +39 0932 751286

www.fattoriedellelorri.it

Chef Ninni Radicini creates the most exquisite dishes from seasonal local produce. The restaurant owner, Giuseppe Barone, also runs a cooking school La Scuola Mediterranea di Enogastronomia Nosco in the former Cappuccine convent in Ragusa Ibla. www.scuolanosco.it

► LOCANDA DEL COLONNELLO

Vico Biscari, 6 – Modica

☎ +39 0932 752423

www.locandadelcolonnello.it

This restaurant, with its relaxed atmosphere, Chef Davide Minerva's delicious food, its excellent local wines and warm ambience, makes you want to return again and again.

► TRATTORIA 'LA FOGLIA'

Via Capodieci, Ortigia, Syracuse

www.lafoglia.it

La Foglia is a one-off experience, memorable for its food, which must compete with the unique interior décor (mirroring the interior decoration of its owners' home). In Ortigia, close to the sea. Just go.



Clockwise from top left: La Foglia trattoria in Syracuse; lunch at Planeta Wine Estates

hewn from the rock. It is the oldest church in Modica, only discovered in 1987. Its one room is decorated with Byzantine icons including Christ Pantocrater, with Madonna and Child and the Archangel Michael. Tombs have been unearthed within its interior. With all the grandeur of Modica's Baroque theatricality, it might be this small church that will linger in the memory.

The surrounding landscape reveals its agrarian heritage in the plots marked out by low dry-stone walls. Farmhouses – many built in the 17th and 18th centuries – are characteristic of the landscape. Distinguishing features include a small fortified tower – with slits in the tower walls for defence – and a guardhouse. Farms today grow cereals, grapes, olives, carob, figs, and vegetables.

From Modica it is a 20-minute drive to Ragusa, the capital of the province Ragusa is divided into

two parts by a deep gorge. When the earthquakes struck in 1693 the nobility of Ragusa rebuilt their palaces on the ruins of the old town, now called Ragusa Ibla. Here, the most magnificent palace, Palazzo Donnafugato, includes an intimate 150-seat theatre, *Teatro Donnafugato*, opened seasonally for public performances. It is close to the picturesque Piazza Duomo and majestic Chiesa di San Giorgio, designed by Gagliardi in 1738. The larger part of the city, Ragusa Superiore, is built on a grid street plan. It houses many Baroque *palazzi* and churches too. And if you tire of Baroque head to Marina di Ragusa to walk its sandy beaches and swim in the clear sea. ■

INFORMATION

► Rosalind Ormiston travelled with The Contented Traveller Company, flying Ryanair from Stansted to Comiso, and staying at Torre del Sud Hotel, Modica.

Building the Dream

The time has come for **Jane Smith** and husband Richard to start finalizing the look of their new house. And that process will begin with the stairwell...



Jane Smith runs an estate agency in Le Marche: www.magicmarche.com. You can contact Jane at: jane@magicmarche.com. Her husband, Richard, runs a restoration management company: www.smithpropertyconsultancy.com. You can contact Richard at: richard@smithprops.com

The reclamation yard was an Aladdin's Cave of historical Italian riches: ancient door columns, antique tiles, water fountains, rusty but beautiful railings. The yard also had many pallets of *travertino* and original *cotto* floor tiles – just what I wanted for the house. I agreed a good deal, the tiles were delivered and Eugenio, our fabulous floor tiler, went to work with his artistic eye. We would use *travertino* throughout the ground floor and stairwell area and *cotto* in the bedrooms.

A second visit this month was to finalise the design and colour of our hand-made wrought iron stair railings. I had searched the internet for designs used in historical palazzos and found one I liked. For the colour, I moved away from the traditional black and graphite and chose instead a dark chestnut brown with a soft gold brushstroke on top. We did a test piece at the workshop; it looked great. Upon delivery two weeks later it took ten hours of precise work to fit the railings throughout the three-floor stairwell and they looked beautiful.

Assembly of the kitchen began this month. We wanted something bespoke in design and colour. We bought all the carcasses and door fronts from Ikea then hired a carpenter to add beading, cladding and skirting to create our own design. I then painted the units in colours chosen from Farrow & Ball. It was a marathon of painting; 32 doors and drawers, three coats each back and front, plus the island unit took 90 hours of painting! Thankfully I love painting.



Other finishing works this month included connecting and testing the *termocamino* in the kitchen (successful), adding internal blue shutters to all the first-floor bedroom windows, electrical cabling run throughout the house and socket covers fitted, ceilings and beams painted a soft antique white and walls painted with a white undercoat. It was now all coming together at speed.

'NASA' also had lift-off: we had built a small room at ground floor level which was the technical hub of the house. The cold water tank, hot water tank, boiler, solar panel feeds, underfloor heating, telephone and electrical cabling all came together in this room and from here travelled underfloor or vertically round the house. Thankfully there was sufficient space in there for Richard to use part of this room as his workshop (man-shed) and he was thrilled about that.

With four weeks to go until we moved in and just seven weeks until Christmas and the arrival of our family, the pressure was now on to finish all works and make the house truly habitable. ■



THIS MONTH'S EXPERTS



ROBERT HOFSTEEDE is a registered and licensed real estate agent in Le Marche, and Managing Director of Marche Property Net. His partner, Monique de Veer, has been running the holiday rental

agency Le Marche Explorer for over 15 years.
www.marchepropertynet.com
www.le-marche-explorer.com



LAURA PROTTI is dual qualified as an Italian *avvocato* and English solicitor. She has extensive experience in Italian property law, international private law, contract law, succession law, and

taxation, and has assisted with the drafting and updating of books and articles on Italian Law.
www.leplaw.co.uk



MAXIMILLIAN SMITH is Marketing Manager at De'Longhi UK and has a wealth of knowledge about coffee. De'Longhi make some of the best coffee machines on the market today – to see

the full range of options for home coffee machines see their website at
www.seriousaboutcoffee.com

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Our experts are here to help with all your questions about Italy. Email your questions to italia@anthem-publishing.com, or write to us at our usual address, as given on page 18.

RESTORE OR REBUILD?

Q *My brother has bought an old farmhouse in Le Marche, and is determined to knock it down and rebuild a modern house over three storeys (the original is just two). Is this legal? And what permissions will he be required to obtain? He'd like to make the building larger than the original footprint (as well as going up a storey), but I've read that this isn't an option. Can you please advise?*

Daniele Totting, Chipping Sodbury

A The reason that unrestored properties in Italy tend to be a bit more expensive is the fact that, in the rural area, generally you are not allowed to build a new house. For farmers this could be a bit different. Therefore, by buying a ruin you are also buying the volume to use for a new house. Using the old materials, of course, adds more character to your property.

It is our experience with Marche Property Restorations (www.marchepropertyrestorations.com) that even when technically a house is in a reasonable condition, knocking it down and rebuilding it can be financially more attractive. There are fewer surprises and you could negotiate a fixed price with the builder. Furthermore, you can make the house more comfortable, spacious, energy friendly and damp proof.

In the past, it was only allowed to use the original volume when rebuilding. However, due to the fact that the Italian government would like to stimulate economic growth, a new law has been introduced that allows temporarily and under certain circumstances the addition of 10 per cent, 20 per cent or even 40 per cent extra volume. However, as a rule, the more you add, the greater the restrictions and the more

tax you will have to pay. In general, adding 20 per cent to the original volume is doable. Do not forget that this law (referred to in Italy as *piano casa*) is running in Le Marche until the end of 2016. There is no firm news as yet that the government will extend the *piano casa* again.

Concerning the modern three-storey house, the strength of the rural area in Le Marche and Italy is not only the olive trees, cypresses and rolling hills but also the characteristic *marchigiani* farmhouses. The councils in Le Marche are very much aware of the value of this historic landscape – it is for them a source of income, a real tourist attraction. Therefore, they are not eager to “spoil” this beautiful rural landscape with modern houses. The “view” is an important aspect of the value of a property. So, also for your own benefit is it good that the typical *marchigiani* landscape, including the houses, is as much as possible protected. There is, of course, more leeway in areas with a commercial designation. Alternatively, you could buy a modern house near towns where councils have already designated certain areas for urban expansion.

Usually councils will approve building plans whereby the “outline” and “character” of the original house is more or less conserved. Consequently, having bought an old farmhouse in an agricultural zone, your brother would be most unlikely ever to get permission to add another floor. Most of the time it is even difficult to enlarge the windows. The more new elements you add to the property like roof terraces, balconies, etc, the more difficult it will be to get permission from the councils. At least this is the situation with most of the councils in Le Marche. The challenge for your brother is to build his dream house within these restrictions and blend it sympathetically into the Marchigiani landscape. We have more than 15 years experience in restoring properties in Le Marche and we would be happy to help him!

Robert Hoffsteede, Marche Property Net

An important factor in a property's value is the view



ALFA ROMEO ROAD TRIP

Q My wife and I would like to celebrate my retirement next year by hiring an Alfa Romeo and taking a road trip across Italy, from top to toe. We've mapped out all of the landmarks, cities, villages and towns we'd like to visit, but one thing we're not sure about is the legalities. We'd like to spread the trip over a six-month period, and I was wondering what the law was on using our American driver's permits in Europe for such long stretches of time. Would we be able to hire a car for this long? What paperwork do we need to take with us? Are there certain Italian road laws which we may not be aware of?

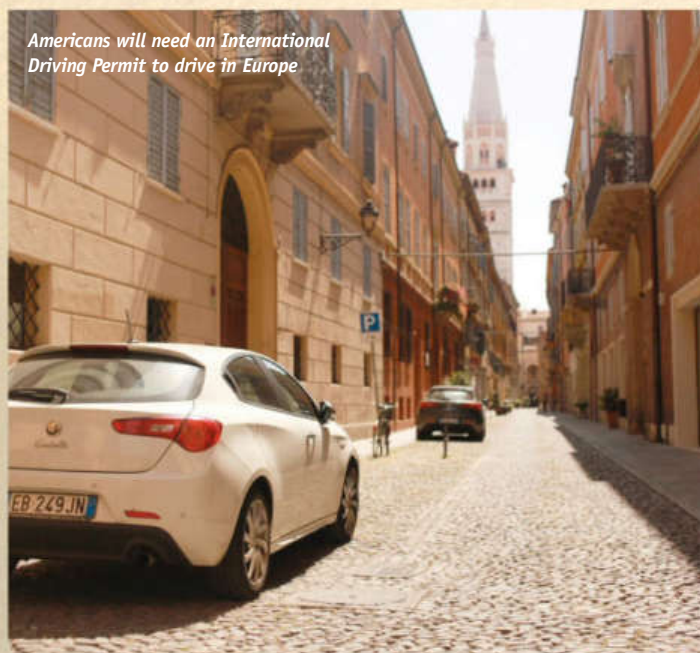
Randy and Jill Donovan, Sacramento, California.

A American tourists wishing to drive in Italy should obtain an International Driving Permit before leaving the US. If they are still abroad when the permit expires they can apply for a new one by mail through the American Automobile Association (AAA). Valid American driving licences may also be used if they are accompanied by a sworn translation into Italian.

Americans who are registered with the local /Anagrafe/ (Bureau of Vital Statistics) as resident in Italy must apply for an Italian driving licence within one year of the date of registration. This is because there is no reciprocal recognition of driving licence between the United States and Italy, so an Italian licence must be obtained. To qualify for a licence it is necessary to pass a written test, a driving test and a medical examination.

Some rental car companies allow cars to be rented for long periods or without limitation, whereas others require the rental agreement to be renewed on a monthly basis. It is advisable to ask the rental company about the specific requirements for a six-month contract. It is worth noting that some agencies require advance payment on a non-chargeable prepaid credit card.

Laura Protti, LEP Law



Americans will need an International Driving Permit to drive in Europe

Laura Protti is the founder of LEP Law. She is dual-qualified as an Italian *avvocato* and English solicitor, and specialises in assisting British and Italian clients with matters relating to Italian law. Visit her website at www.leplaw.co.uk for more.



Coffee Corner

NEW COFFEE MACHINE

Q My father is turning 70 later this year and my husband and I want to buy him a coffee machine as he spends at least £3 a day buying cappuccinos from the local deli. Can you please advise on the running costs of your various machines? If we pay the initial outlay for the machine itself, is he likely to save some money in the long run?

Anita Goodfellow, via email

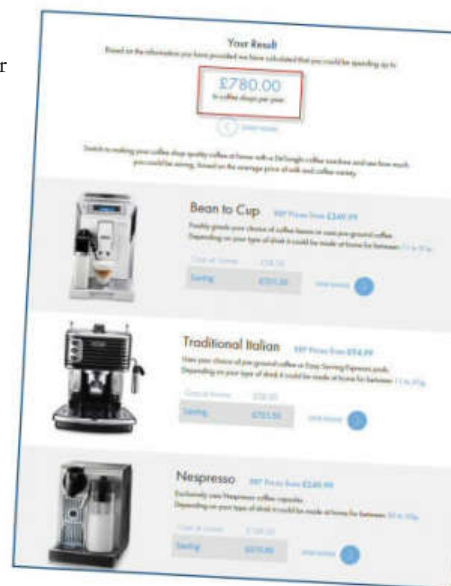
A We actually have a "coffee cost calculator" on our Serious About Coffee section of the De'Longhi website, and also incorporated into our coffee app, so we would recommend downloading this! The way this works is you input your weekly expense in a coffee shop, and based on a yearly tally we recommend the right machine for you.

However, it is quite difficult to quantify without knowing the type of drink the consumer prefers. For example, with a Nespresso Lattissima machine at an RRP of £279.99, you can deliver fresh milk for cappuccino or caffè latte, and the coffee capsules work out at about 28-30p each, so for one tenth of the price of a cappuccino in a coffee chain you can enjoy gourmet coffee at home.

A traditional pump espresso machine can range anywhere from £80 to £400, and the costs are only related to the ingredients you buy (coffee beans or pre-ground coffee, milk, sugar) so costs can be minimal, as little as 12p per cup. The disadvantage of this is you have to have good coffee knowledge and a level of skill in creating your perfect beverage.

So, at the higher end, a fully automatic bean-to-cup machine will grind fresh beans and deliver perfect espresso every time, and in more premium models deliver fresh frothed or steamed milk automatically at the touch of a button. Essentially this machine is your barista at home. Costs can be as low as 12p per cup depending on the cost of the beans bought.

Maximillian Smith, Trade Marketing Manager De'Longhi
www.seriousaboutcoffee.com





Renting a home in Italy can be rather cheaper than doing so in the UK

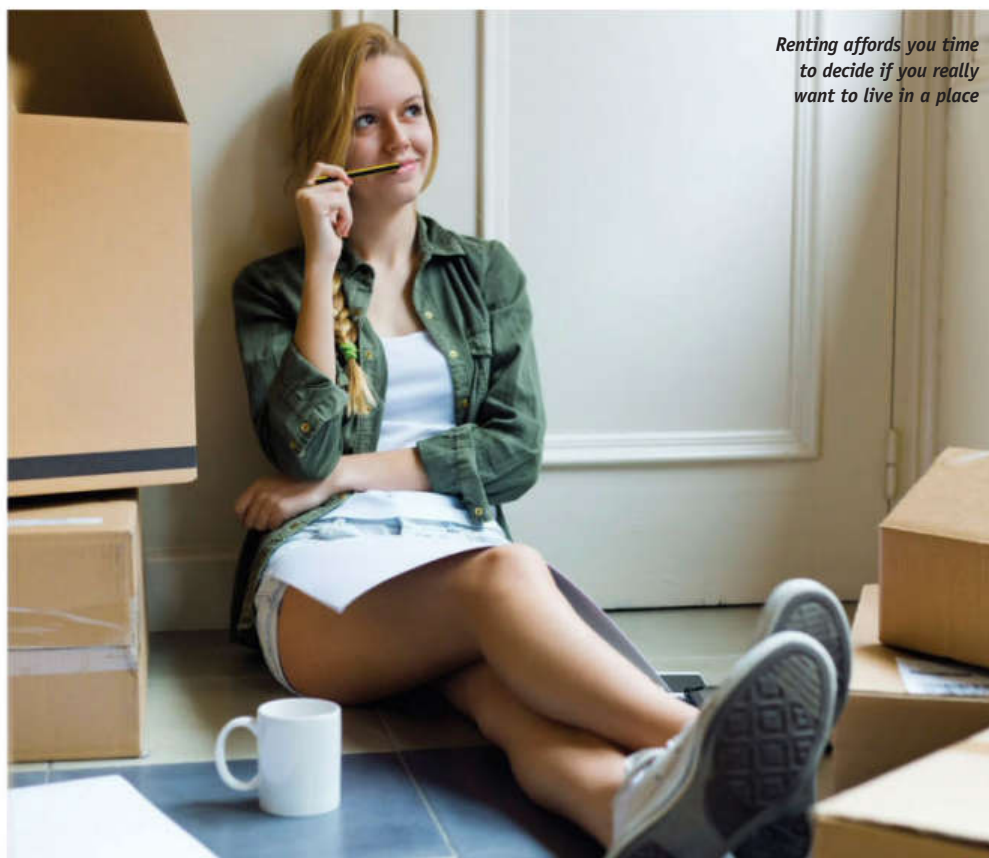
Renting a Home in Italy

If you're not sure about whether or where to buy, or you just fancy the idea of spending a few months or years in Italy, renting a home makes a lot of sense. **Fleur Kinson** guides you through the practicalities...

You might be surprised by how many non-Italians rent properties long term in Italy. We're all accustomed to the idea of foreign nationals falling in love with the country and buying themselves a home here, but many others either aren't in a financial position to buy or aren't yet certain whether – or where – they want to buy. And so they rent for a while. And see what they think.

Still others have no thoughts of ever buying in Italy; they just want the adventure of living here for a few months or years. They might settle in one location and get to know it intimately, or use the comparative flexibility of renting to explore several different parts of the country.

For those intending to buy a home eventually, renting first can prove very sensible. It allows you to see



Renting affords you time to decide if you really want to live in a place

Photography © iStock

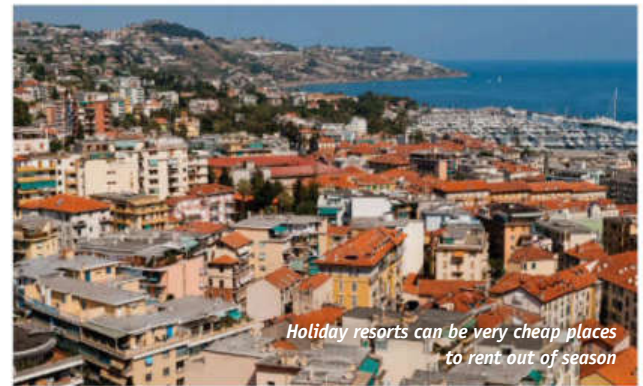
HOW AFFORDABLE IS IT?

Renting a property in Italy is usually a much less expensive undertaking than it is in, say, southern England. Comparable properties cost less to rent in Italy. As a very rough guide, monthly rents on two-bedroom homes in different parts of Italy might be as follows: in villages and non-tourist small towns, from €350; across Puglia, from €500; in Montepulciano (Tuscany) and Naples (Campania), from €600; in San Remo (Liguria), from €700; and in Milan, Florence or Rome, from €800. Obviously, if you're a solo traveller, or a couple looking to share a bedroom, you'll be looking at still smaller rental rates than these.

As a general rule, Italian cities are more costly than Italian small towns. Business capital Milan and tourist magnets Rome, Florence and Venice command some of the very highest rents. Villages, meanwhile, can be the very cheapest places to live. And it's worth pointing out the immense charm of Italy's small towns and villages. These make a great choice if you're considering renting. In most villages and small towns, you'll find a very warm, welcoming community and a healthy, sustainable pace of life. There are likely to be local traditions and colourful festivals, and no shortage of old historical buildings to admire. You might find that one of the country's smaller cities or larger towns is right for you. It's always nice, for instance, to be somewhere with a train station, so you can explore the country by rail rather than being wholly dependent on having a car.



Rates in small towns and villages are lower than in cities



Holiday resorts can be very cheap places to rent out of season

HOW LONG IS LONG-TERM?

How long you want to spend in Italy is obviously up to you, but various restrictions apply depending on your nationality. There are also, of course, the individual requirements of a rental property's contract. 'Long-term' rentals are usually for six months or more, but they can be less than this. If you're a non-EU national, you're technically only allowed to be in Italy for 90 days at a time, and some landlords will be sympathetic to this. (Do note, however, that

your residency status changes if you enrol as a student, for example at a language school. Then you can more easily stay for longer than three months.) EU nationals, meanwhile, don't have to worry about any of this, being free to live and work in Italy for as long as they like.

Here's a potential hiccup for the average non-Italian renter: Italians tend not to take a short-termist view when it comes to property. Thus the most common rental contract offered

by Italian rental agencies is the *quattro per quattro*, which expects a minimum four-year tenancy. Yes, *four years*. If that's a lot longer than you want to commit to, you should also investigate other ways of finding a home to rent, in case none of the local rental agencies you find can be persuaded to agree to an alternative contract for you. Note that UK-based specialist long-term rental agencies also exist who are generally more understanding of the needs of non-Italian would-be-renters. But such agencies often only have properties available in the most popular parts of Italy.

If six months is about the right length of time you'd like to spend in Italy to begin with, note that one of the easiest – and possibly most economical and comfortable – ways to do this can be to stay out-of-season in a holiday property. The holiday rentals season is pretty dead from November to April, especially in countryside locations and indeed anywhere not in a big tourist city, so many holiday lettings companies offer rock-bottom rates to people willing to rent over that period. Alas, these bargain rates rarely extend to renting a holiday property for a whole year, as lettings companies are reluctant to miss out on the much higher summer rates they can get.





AGENCIES AND LANDLORDS

Local Italian rental agencies have properties of all price ranges but, as we've seen, it's not always easy to sign up for less than four years' tenancy. UK-based agencies offer shorter-term contracts, but are less likely to have Italy's very cheapest properties on their books and tend to specialise in the most popular parts of Italy. There is one huge advantage to the latter, however, and that's language. If your Italian isn't strong, a UK-based agency is going to explain everything to you in English and you'll be able to read the contract in full. Many Italy-based agencies can do this too, of course, but it's less guaranteed.

Before we look at the pros and cons of going privately, directly through a landlord, do note an interesting alternative to rental agencies and landlords, and that is long-term house-sitting companies. Wealthy Italians, and foreign owners in Italy, frequently employ reliable people to look after their homes – and often pets – for several months while they're away on business or pleasure. Sign up with such a company and you could find yourself enjoying a very inexpensive

time in Italy somewhere. You're unlikely to have a huge choice on location, but hey, isn't Italy lovely everywhere?

Of course, you could approach landlords directly. The advantages of this are that you're likely to pay a bit less since there won't be any agency fees, and also that you're likely to be able to negotiate a more flexible rental contract. Private landlords can advertise online, in the locality itself, or be discovered through word-of-mouth if you're already in – or have contacts in – Italy. If you do use a private landlord, make sure you request a contract laying out the terms of your tenancy – don't just rely on an unwritten honourable agreement. As always, make sure you understand the contract in full before you sign anything. If you'd like to make use of a legal professional to ensure everything's above board, then do so.

All agencies and landlords operate slightly differently, but you're likely to be asked to show proof of your earnings or savings, your passport and an Italian *codice fiscale* (an Italian tax code, which can easily be acquired). You might be required to pay

more than one month's rent in advance. How much notice you're required to give before ending your tenancy can vary, so be sure to enquire about this before you agree to a property – perhaps even before you view it.

Finally, a quick word about furnished versus unfurnished properties. Be aware that in Italy 'unfurnished' usually means the absence not just of chairs, tables and beds, but also of kitchen cupboards, a fridge, a cooker, curtains and carpets. (You might, however, be able to buy these from the departing tenant if you wish to.) 'Semi-furnished' places will usually have all these basics, while 'furnished' properties are likely to be stocked with things such as crockery, bedding and perhaps even towels – in the style of a self-catering holiday property.

Renting a home in Italy can be a very affordable way to get to know the country well or indeed to assess whether a particular area is where you really want to buy a home. Many non-Italians like you have already rented long-term, and would recommend doing it. So do your research, find the right place, and go for it.



Many overseas buyers have previously dipped their toes in the waters of the rental market

➤ what daily life is really like in Italy and, crucially, it gives you the chance to get to know an area well enough to understand whether it's where you really want to buy. Some renters cleverly choose a rental property positioned between several areas that interest them, and use that home as a base to explore those places until they decide which one appeals most. So, for example, they might rent in northern Lazio, and from here explore Tuscany, Umbria and Abruzzo as well as Lazio itself. Ultimately, it's easier to rent and then move out than to buy and swiftly re-sell if the location turns out to be not quite what you wanted. ■

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4 takes on PHEASANT

When handled properly, pheasant's powerful flavour is absolutely delicious. Enjoy the season's game with these four fantastic recipes...





Pheasant soup with porcini bruschetta

Zuppa di fagiano con bruschette ai funghi porcini

SERVES 4
► **Preparation**
30 minutes
► **Cooking**
1 hour 50 minutes

FOR THE PHEASANT

- 1 (mature) pheasant, washed and dried
- 2 egg whites
- 100g porcini, cleaned, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 sprig each of thyme and rosemary
- 3 crushed juniper berries
- 1-2 tbsp Marsala
- 1 small unblemished porcini to garnish

FOR THE PORCINI BRUSCHETTA

- 4 slices ciabatta
- 300g porcini, cleaned, roughly chopped
- 1-2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp flat-leaf parsley, chopped

Take the breast and leg meat off the bone of the pheasant and chop finely. Mix the chopped meat with the egg whites. Chop the remaining pheasant into 4-6 pieces. Heat the oil in a large pan and sauté the pieces over a high heat for about 15 minutes. Add the porcini, thyme, rosemary, crushed juniper berries, the pheasant and egg-white mix, and 1.5 litres cold water. Cook gently over a low heat without a lid for about 1½ hours.

Strain the broth, return to the pan. Add the Marsala and season. Reheat, ladle into bowls and add a slice of porcini to each. For the bruschetta, sauté the porcini in butter over a high heat, stirring. Season and sprinkle with parsley. Toast the bread and top with the porcini.



Sweet and sour pheasant

Fagiano all'agro dolce

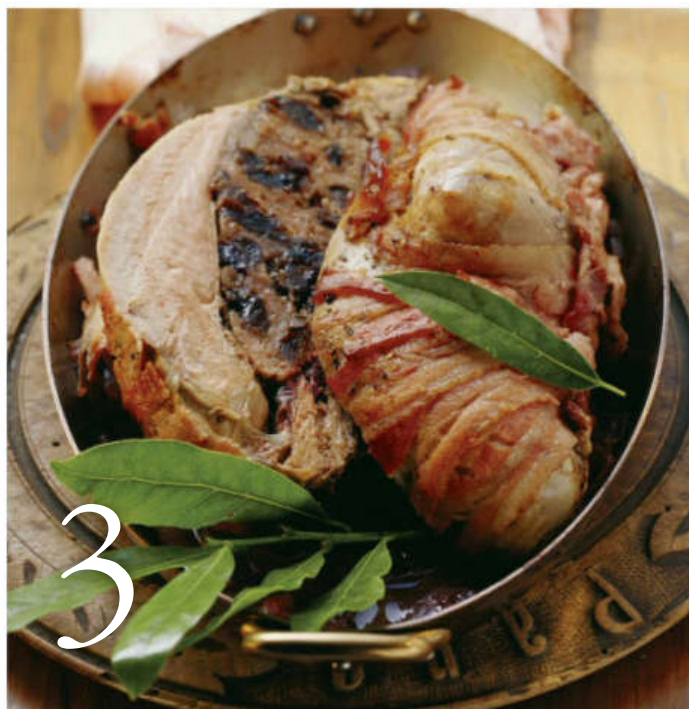
SERVES 4
► **Preparation**
10 minutes
► **Cooking**
25 minutes

- 800g pheasant fillets, skinned, trimmed
- 600g roasted chestnuts
- 500g shallots, peeled, root-end removed
- 2 tbsp juniper berries or 200g cranberries
- 250ml red wine
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 4 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp oil
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- sprig of rosemary, needles removed, chopped

Preheat the oven to 130°C/Gas Mark ½. Cut the fillets into even 4-5 cm pieces. Season. Heat the oil in an ovenproof frying pan and sauté the fillets on all sides over a high heat. Cover the pan with aluminium foil and put into the preheated oven for about 15-20 minutes.

Roughly chop the juniper berries and halve the chestnuts. Fry the shallots, juniper berries and chestnuts in butter, then sprinkle with sugar and caramelize. Deglaze with the wine and cook for about 5 minutes, until reduced. Season with salt and pepper and add rosemary to taste.

Take the cooked pheasant fillets out of the oven, add the cooking juices to the sauce and check the seasoning. Serve the pheasant fillets with the chestnut sauce and a green vegetable, like cavalo nero or savoy cabbage.



Pheasant 'Renaissance-style' *Fagiano rinascimentale*

SERVES 4
► **Preparation**
20 minutes
► **Cooking**
1 hour 10 minutes

1 pheasant, plucked, cleaned FOR THE SAUCE
200g pancetta, sliced 3 spring onions
2 onions, skinned, sliced 2 carrots, peeled
4 tbsp olive oil 4 celery hearts
6-8 bay leaves 6 prunes, stoned
250ml Chianti 750ml Chianti
1 tbsp red-wine vinegar small glass Vin Santo

FOR THE STUFFING

2 salsicce sausages, skinned, chopped
1 tsp each of ground cloves, cinnamon and nutmeg
zest of 1 unwaxed lemon, shredded
6 prunes, stoned, roughly chopped

Rub the pheasant with salt and pepper. Mix the salsicce, ground cloves, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix the prunes into the stuffing with the lemon zest. Stuff the pheasant, close with cocktail sticks, then cover with pancetta and tie with kitchen string.

Heat the oil in a roasting tin and sweat the onions with the bay leaves. Brown the pheasant all over. Add the wine and vinegar. Cover the tin, reduce the heat and braise for 1 hour.

Trim the spring onions and slice the white part. Finely dice the carrots. Thinly slice the celery hearts. Blanch the vegetables in boiling water for 3-4 minutes. Dice the prunes.

Take the pheasant out of the tin. Remove the string. Add the Chianti and Vin Santo to the tin, season with salt and heat through. Mix with the vegetables and prunes. Halve the pheasant and serve with the sauce.



Pheasant terrine *Terrina di fagiano*

SERVES 4
► **Preparation**
30 minutes
► **Cooking**
1 hour

400g pheasant livers
2 small onions, peeled, finely diced
1 small clove garlic, peeled, chopped
150g unsalted butter
3 egg whites
2 tbsp Marsala
30g pistachio kernels

10-12 slices pancetta to line the dish

Clean the pheasant livers and remove any tubes and membranes. Put into a blender with 1-2 ice cubes and purée roughly.

Heat 2 tbsp butter in a frying pan and sweat the onion and garlic until translucent. Deglaze with Marsala and boil until reduced. Beat the egg whites until stiff.

Butter a terrine dish (350ml) and line with pancetta. Cream the rest of the butter. Mix the puréed liver with the creamed butter, garlic, onions and pistachios. Carefully stir in the beaten egg whites. Season.

Turn the mixture into the bacon-lined dish and give the dish a couple of taps on the work surface to 'settle' the mixture. Cover with aluminium foil, stand the dish in a roasting tin filled to a depth of 1cm with water and cook at 200°C/Gas Mark 6 for about 1 hour, or until set.

Take out of the oven and run a knife around the edge of the terrine to loosen it and turn out onto a platter. Serve warm or cold.

Salvo's Recipes

John and Gip Dammone run Salvo's restaurant in Leeds and have just published a book of favourite recipes from their kitchens. Here we present a taster...

Gnocchi alla Sorrentina

Gnocchi alla Sorrentina

► **SERVES** 6 ► **PREPARATION** 1 hour ► **COOKING** 5 minutes

This traditional dish from the Campania region is always a favourite, especially when kids are around the dinner table. As usual, the ingredients make the dish. Gnocchi are little potato dumplings that my son Salvo loves to make and eat since he went to work in Giorgio Locatelli's kitchen just as he turned 18. I think he made a lot in those three weeks! We bake these in the oven so you will need to use an ovenproof dish.

INGREDIENTS

600g tomato sugo

60g parmesan, grated

150g mozzarella, diced

FOR THE GNOCCHI

1kg potatoes

(avoid waxy ones – desiree are a good option)

300g plain flour (Italian '00' if possible)

1 free range egg

Boil the potatoes (start in salted cold water) in their skins until tender. When cooked, leave to

drain and dry out. When they are cool enough, peel them.

Pass the potatoes through a food ricer into a bowl while still warm, then fold in flour (300g) and the egg. Do not mix too aggressively as you do not want to start stretching the gluten in the flour which will make the gnocchi heavy. A common mistake is to have the mix too soft, so keep adding the flour until it's as firm as short pastry or, if you're a kid, a ball of play-doh.

Knead the flour into the dough a little at a time. The mixture should be pliable but stiff. Remember you will be boiling the gnocchi and if the dough is too soft they will turn sludgy and wet.

Flour the dough and cover with a clean tea towel and leave to rest for ten minutes.

Cutting off a piece off at a time, roll into a long rods with a 2-3cm diameter – like a roll of pound coins). Now slice the rod into medallions about 2cm long, dusting with flour to stop sticking.

Place a regular table fork with the points down on the table. Take one gnocco and, pressing very gently with two fingers, roll it down the fork to curl it ever so slightly and put ridges on it. Repeat.

Rest the finished gnocchi for 15 minutes, then boil them in salted water for five minutes or so until they float. Drain and add to the heated sauce. Gently stir.

Add grated parmesan and place in an ovenproof dish. Top with mozzarella and parmesan and bake in a very hot oven (set to its highest temperature) for ten minutes to gratinate.

SOME GNOCCHI POINTERS

Gnocchi can be made in advance and served later. Simply boil them and cool on a tray before refrigerating in a covered container. Reheat gently in the sugo when required.

It is also possible to freeze them before cooking. Place on a tray before bagging them up to avoid them freezing in a clump. Defrost on a flat tray before cooking.

They're also great tossed in the sugo. When the sauce has covered them, add the diced mozzarella and serve in warm dishes sprinkled with the grated parmesan. By the time it reaches the table, the mozzarella will be just warm enough to enjoy at its best.



Orata alla Pugliese

Orata alla Pugliese

➤ **SERVES** 12 ➤ **PREPARATION** 20 minutes ➤ **COOKING** 30 minutes

This typical dish of sea bream and potatoes utilises the bounty of Puglia. In a recurring theme of the peninsula's culinary heritage, the main ingredients are aromatised with oil, parsley, garlic and pecorino – ewe's milk cheese. The original dish uses a whole large fish that has been descaled and gutted then seasoned inside and out. A dish is lined with sliced potatoes (a quarter of an inch or so) and they are seasoned with salt, pepper, chopped garlic and parsley, half of the pecorino cheese and two or three tablespoons of good olive oil. After placing the fish on top it is covered with another layer of potatoes finished in the same way as the first layer. Half a glass of white wine in the bottom

gives a bit of steam off to help with moisture.

INGREDIENTS

1kg bream (skinned, filleted and pin boned)

1.5kg potatoes (you won't go wrong with charlottes), peeled and sliced into quarter-inch pieces

a big bunch of flat leaf parsley, chopped

3 garlic cloves, chopped

200g pecorino romano

extra virgin olive oil

½ glass dry white wine

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4. We modify the original recipe by filleting and skinning the fish first, but your fishmonger will be happy to fillet and pin bone it for you.

Because the fish is boned and filleted it cooks far more quickly, so par-boil the potatoes for 10 minutes in their skins. When they have cooled enough, peel and slice.

Using 1.5kg potatoes to 1kg of fish fillets would make a large tray. The pecorino adds piquant balance to the spuds and the tray will be enough to feed a dozen people. Layer the ingredients as in the original dish and cook for 30 minutes.



Aubergine parmesan

Parmigiana di melanzane

► **SERVES** as many as you like ► **PREPARATION** 20 minutes ► **COOKING** 40 minutes

This recipe features cooked aubergines layered with mozzarella, tomato sugo and parmesan, then baked as you would a lasagne. It is simple to make, with endless variations. You can pan fry, grill, bake or batter and fry the aubergines. Some like to use a meat ragu as the sugo, or bung in any cheese that happens to be handy. Yesterday's leftover *arrabiata* makes a great layer too.

First, make a tomato sugo.

Whisk together eggs, pecorino, pepper and salt. You will also need some grated parmesan (or

pecorino romano if you prefer) and chopped cow's milk mozzarella.

Cut the aubergines into half-centimetre thick slices. Flour and dip into the egg mix – if it's a bit too thick, loosen it with a tablespoon of water or milk.

Gently shallow fry on both sides in plenty of veg oil (one-inch deep) and rest on kitchen paper, turning the slices to absorb any surplus oil. They will have a nice tasty omelette-like coating.

In a deep dish, layer the ingredients. Start with the sauce on bottom, then aubergines, sauce

and cheeses and finish with a turn of the pepper grinder. Repeat for three layers and leave out mozzarella on the top layer.

Bake at 180°C/Gas Mark 4 for 40 minutes. Keep your eye on it and turn down to 160°C if necessary. Top with mozzarella for the last ten minutes of cooking.

Leave to rest for 20 minutes before eating.

I have deliberately not put any weights or measures on here, because using basic judgement and adjusting it to your taste will bring the best results. Express yourself!

Fig & almond tart with lemon mascarpone

Crostata di fichi e mandorle

➤ **SERVES** 4-6 ➤ **PREPARATION** 30 minutes ➤ **COOKING** 15 minutes

When we were competing on Gordon Ramsay's *The F Word* in London we didn't know what kind of dessert we had to prepare until the day before. Our instructions were to make a dessert in front of the television cameras using Gordon's recipe. I have to say the recipe was a doddle and very easy to follow. Here it is.

FOR THE FRANGIPANE

125g butter

125g icing sugar, plus extra for dusting

2 eggs, beaten

125g ground almonds

25g flour

YOU ALSO NEED

250g puff pastry

1 egg yolk, for glazing

4-5 ripe figs, depending on size

100g mascarpone

1 lemon, zest only

icing sugar, for dusting

Pre-heat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6.

Roll out the puff pastry thinly on a lightly-floured surface until a 2mm thickness. Using a 13cm plate or saucer as a guide, cut out four rounds and place on two large lightly-buttered baking sheets. Prick the pastry all over with a fork to stop it puffing up.

Smooth the frangipane over the centre of the pastry, leaving a 2cm border. Egg wash around the outside and dust with icing sugar. Bake in the oven for 4-5 minutes.

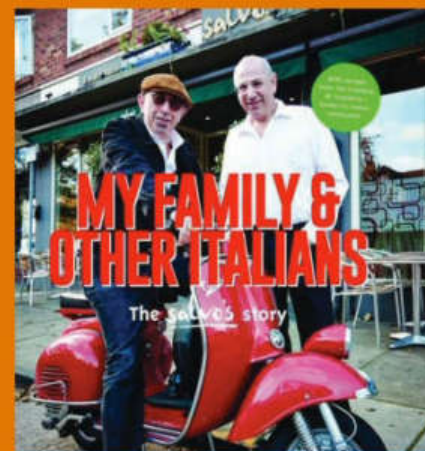
Slice the figs into quarters and again into eighths (if large). Remove the tart from the oven and arrange the figs on top so that the slices slightly overlap. Dust with a little more icing sugar and bake until the pastry is crisp and golden (approx. eight minutes).

Add icing sugar to taste in the mascarpone and grate in the zest of a lemon. Mix thoroughly.

Serve the tarts with a spoonful of the lemon mascarpone.

INFORMATION

➤ *My Family and Other Italians* is published by RMC Books. ISBN 978-1-907998-19-5



Pronto!

Some of the more complex Italian recipes will take hours to prepare – and just as long to enjoy! – but when you're in a hurry you're going to need quick-and-easy recipes.

Italia! presents five of our favourites...



Beef tagliata with sun-dried tomatoes and rocket

Tagliata di manzo con pomodori secchi e rucola

This classic Italian take on roast beef goes very well with simply served new potatoes.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 10 minutes
- **COOKING** 30 minutes

300g piece of thick-cut fillet steak

2 small handfuls of washed rocket

5 sun-dried tomatoes

50g Parmesan cheese

1 tbsp olive oil

sea salt and black pepper

FOR THE BALSAMIC REDUCTION

100ml balsamic vinegar

2 tbsp honey

FOR THE POTATOES

200g small new potatoes, scrubbed

2 tbsp olive oil

Gently boil the potatoes until tender, drain. Simmer the balsamic vinegar and honey in a saucepan over a medium flame for 10-15 minutes, until reduced by half and syrupy.

Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a large sauté pan over high heat and add the potatoes. Turn occasionally. When browned all over, remove and dry on kitchen paper.

Season the steak with salt and pepper, then drizzle over olive oil. Heat a pan over a high flame, then sear the meat on all sides until cooked (2-4 minutes on each side for rare). Remove from the pan.

Using scissors, snip the sun-dried tomatoes into slivers. Arrange the rocket on a serving plate, sprinkle with the tomatoes. Slice the fillets and arrange on the rocket, shaving the Parmesan over the top. Drizzle over the balsamic reduction and share out the potatoes. Serve immediately.



Asparagus, pea and mint with spelt spaghetti

Spaghetti al farro con asparagi e piselli

Spelt is a grain that is high in fibre, protein and vitamins, and – though not gluten-free – can be tolerated by some people with wheat allergies. And it hasn't been this fashionable since Roman times!

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 5 minutes
- **COOKING** 10 minutes

1 bundle asparagus (about 400g)

175g fresh shelled peas

100g ricotta

1 free-range egg

150g whole wheat spelt spaghetti

1 handful of fresh mint, finely chopped

2 tbsp Parmesan cheese, grated

sea salt and black pepper

Snap the ends off the asparagus and cut them into 5cm lengths, leaving the tip intact. Put two large pans of boiling water on the hob and then bring to the boil. Add the spaghetti to the water and cook the pasta for the required time.

In the meantime, add the asparagus tips to the other pan of water and cook for 3-4 minutes, if using a wider variety, adding the peas after 2 minutes. If using a finer variety, add the peas and the asparagus at the same time. Cook for around 2-3 minutes, until both are tender.

Beat the egg with the ricotta in a separate bowl, add the mint and season. Drain the pasta when cooked, and return to the pan, add the drained peas and asparagus and stir the ricotta and egg mixture through the cooked pasta. Serve immediately with the grated Parmesan cheese.



Mackerel fillets with potato and olive salad

Filetti di sgombro con insalata di patate e olive

There are lots of different fish called 'mackerel' and the ones you find in Atlantic waters may not be the same as those from the Mediterranean, but they will still work just as well!

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 10 minutes
- **COOKING** 20-25 minutes

4 mackerel fillets
 200g Jersey new potatoes, scrubbed clean
 ½ tbsp hot mustard
 1 handful of black olives
 1 tbsp red-wine vinegar
 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
 1 handful chives, snipped
 1 tbsp olive oil, for the mackerel fillets
 sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
 lemon wedges, to serve

Gently boil the potatoes in salted water for 15 minutes, or until tender. Whisk the mustard, vinegar and seasoning in a small bowl. Add the oil and whisk further.

When the potatoes are done, set them aside to cool for 10 minutes. When cool, slice them roughly and add to the dressing. Add the olives, and top with the snipped chives.

Meanwhile, season the fillets with salt and pepper. Heat half the olive oil in a large frying pan, add half the fillets skin side down, cook for 3-4 minutes on each side, or until completely cooked through. Remove from the heat and set aside. Cook the remaining fillets.

Serve the fillets with the potato salad and a wedge of lemon.



Tomato and pesto tartlets

Tortine di pesto e pomodori

We can see here the influence of a pizza recipe, but with a basil pesto as the base sauce, and a light pastry that demands to be served with an aperitif. The kids will love these too, so you might want to double up on the ingredients.

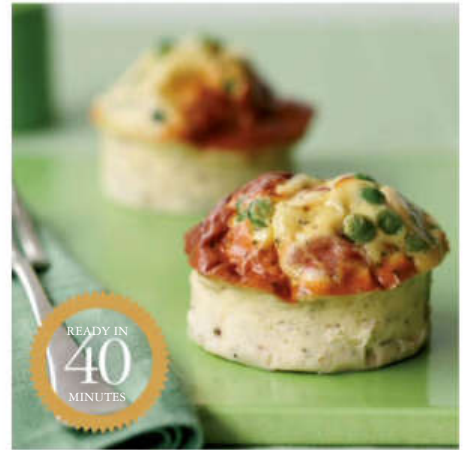
- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 10 minutes
- **COOKING** 10-15 minutes

200g ready-made puff pastry, rolled into two 14cm squares
 2 medium-sized tomatoes
 2 tbsp basil pesto
 1 free-range egg
 100g Mozzarella di Bufala Campana
 8 fresh basil leaves

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Slice the tomatoes into thin slivers, discarding the juice and the seeds. Spoon 1 tbsp of pesto onto each pastry square and spread over the pastry leaving a 1cm rim all the way around. Brush the rim with the egg.

Divide the tomato slices between the tarts and bake until golden and crispy, about 10-15 minutes.

Remove from the oven and tear the mozzarella over the tarts. Garnish with the basil leaves and serve with a green salad.



Mini baked frittatas with ricotta, peas and prosciutto crudo

Frittatine al forno con ricotta, piselli e prosciutto crudo

Here are some more bite-sized treats that will go down just as well for a TV dinner with the family as they will at a dinner party.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 10 minutes
- **COOKING** 30 minutes

50g peas
 4 free-range eggs
 100g ricotta
 3 tbsp chopped fresh mint
 1 large slice of prosciutto crudo, torn into small pieces
 salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Grease 2 large ramekins, lining the bottom with greaseproof paper. Blanch the peas for 1 minute in boiling water, then drain well.

In a bowl, beat the eggs and ricotta. Add the mint, drained peas and prosciutto. Mix well and season generously with salt and pepper.

Pour the egg mixture into the ramekins and place in a roasting tin. Pour in enough water to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins, then carefully place in the oven and cook for around 25-30 minutes, after which the mixture should be nicely set.

Remove from the oven and carefully take the frittatas out of the ramekin (if they are stuck, run a knife around the edge). Serve with a green salad.

BALSAMIC VINEGARS

A slowly matured balsamic vinegar can lift most dishes, especially salads, or when mixed with quality olive oil for the dipping of bread. We select a **collection of the best** on offer...

No decent Italian restaurant will offer pre-lunch or dinner bread without a bowl of olive oil and balsamic vinegar. And the quality of both of these latter ingredients makes all the difference to the start of your meal. Last issue we sampled the olive oils, and this month it's the turn of the balsamics... Made using a cooked reduction of trebbiano grape juice, a quality balsamic vinegar should be aged for as long as possible to achieve a depth of flavour that is pretty well devoid of a distinct acidity. When it comes to buying a bottle of balsamic vinegar it pays to, well, pay. Here we present a selection of mid-priced balsamics... Costly, for sure, but worth going that extra mile for great taste.



Manicardi Nero Elisir Aceto Balsamico di Modena
From *Something Italian*
www.something-italian.com
Price TBC

Although not pictured here, this fantastic vinegar comes boxed together with a stopper/pourer and even a tiny (5cmx5cm) book of recipes that it can be incorporated into. The quality of this particular balsamic rises well above its superb presentation however... Although not particularly 'thick' or viscous it does have a magnificent depth of flavour. The cooked grape must adds a great deal to what's going on here – it gives this vinegar body and substance. We sampled it both mixed with our favourite olive oil (it works brilliantly with lightly toasted ciabatta), and drizzled over a simple tomato and green leaf salad. It worked supremely well on both counts. One of the best we've ever encountered.



VERDICT ★★★★★

Not too thick, not too thin, this is a robustly-flavoured balsamic vinegar that works well with quality oil or on its own.

1 CARLUCCIO'S ACETO BALSAMICO DI MODENA

From Carluccio's

www.carluccios.com

Price £19.95 for 250ml

This is a lighter balsamic vinegar that most on these pages; it's fairly liquid rather than thick but the flavour is rich and well structured. An 'all-rounder' that works with oil, in salad dressings and with meat and fish.

VERDICT ★★★

This is a great balsamic, with a rich flavour and medium structure. It tastes great with pretty well anything and makes a great kitchen staple.

2 AGREST ACETO BALSAMICO DI MODENA

From Camisa

From www.camisa.co.uk

Price £4.50 for 250ml

A rich-tasting balsamic vinegar with an unctuous viscosity, excellent value for money. Finely balanced in terms of sweetness and acidity, it works well mixed with olive oil, also great cut with lemon juice.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Lovely and thick, and you can really taste the grape must. Neither too sweet nor too acidic, it's really good with oil and bread.



3 VALLEBONA SARDINIAN GOURMET ACETO BALSAMICO RISERVA

From Vallebona

www.vallebona.co.uk

Price £18.80 for 250ml

Although less 'dense' than many prestige balsamics, this one from Vallebona is really rich in flavour. It has a delightful sharpness to it, though it's sweet on the finish. Strangely good with fish.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Drizzle just a little on a grilled fillet of seabass and the flavours combine perfectly. Tangy with hint of sharpness, but very good.

4 RAINERI BALSAMIC VINEGAR OF MODENA

From Camisa

www.camisa.co.uk

Price £11.00 for 250ml

This is a powerful and complex vinegar which we found best used in small amounts on a steak (it really adds to the flavour of the meat). It's smooth and yet has a lovely acidic punch on the nose.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Why three stars? It just lacks a little in the finish, at this price, but it's a good vinegar nonetheless. Try it with beef or even griddled lamb chops.

5 MANICARDI ACETO BALSAMICO DI MODENA 4 STARS

From Something Italian

www.something-italian.com

Price £29.50 for 250ml

We tried this vinegar with oil, bread and olives as a starter and it worked well. Slightly sweet but balanced in flavour, we heated it up a little with some chilli flakes. It's fairly thick in texture, though not too so.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Yet another balsamic that works well when mixed with a quality olive oil for dipping of bread or even fried strips of steak.

6 MANICARDI ACETO BALSAMICO DI MODENA AMPOULE

From Something Italian

www.something-italian.com

Price £14.50 for 250ml

Same producer as the vinegar to the left, but this one is very different in character. It's richer and denser and has a rather 'heavy' taste (though in a good way). One of the most interesting vinegars we've tried.

VERDICT ★★★★★

A balsamic vinegar with real character, though should be used sparingly. Try it with pork chops, or slow roasted shoulder of lamb.

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THE WHITE WINES OF TUSCANY

Though renowned for its red wines – Chianti and Brunello, especially – Tuscany does offer a choice selection of lesser-known white wines. **Paul Pettengale** investigates...

White wine is starting to globally outstrip the sales of reds, with whites becoming the choice of the younger generation, especially in bars and restaurants. Lighter dishes complement white wines, and are – likewise – increasingly popular in an ever-increasingly health conscious world. And so, what for the wine producers of Tuscany? The

These wines are not widely available; you will have to look towards specialist importers

region is famed for its red wines – Chianti Classico a worldwide favourite – but wine makers have to adapt to the times. Of course, Tuscany has been crafting white wines for hundreds of years, but it's been only relatively recently that white grape varieties, including those from 'abroad' – Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, for instance – have been taken seriously.

The northeast of Italy still dominates in terms of white wine production, but Tuscany is – slowly – catching up. These wines are not widely available, so typically you have to look towards the specialist importers rather than the shelves of your local supermarket, but with quality ever-increasing they deserve a look (and, of course, a taste). Over the page we present seven wines that we'd definitely recommend. ➤





COMITALE BIANCO DEI COLLI DELLA TOSCANA 2013, VILLA CALCINAI

From Berry Bros. & Rudd
www.bbr.com

Price **£14.95**

Made with 90 per cent Grechetto (the grape of Orvieto), 10 per cent Vernaccia di San Gimignano, this is a fresh and lively white wine that partners summer evenings in the sun quite perfectly. It has a delightful floral nose, though that's contrasted by herb and freshly cut grass in the mouth. So it's an interesting one. The finish is pretty abrupt, but don't let it put you off... Just refill your glass and enjoy a quality Tuscan white.



GREAT WITH...

A sunset in the summer.
Or a green salad including
rocket and tomatoes.

SERENA PINOT GRIGIO 2014, BANFI

From Majestic Wine
www.majestic.co.uk
Price **£9.99**

We all know that the best Pinot Grigio comes from the northeast of Italy, right? Well... Over-production in the Veneto in order to satisfy world demand has led, arguably, to a drop in overall quality. But Pinot Grigio from Tuscany? The soil type in the region suits the grape variety and there are some real PG gems to be found, such as this one from the famed Banfi winery. Rich in peach aromas, it's crisp and fruitful in the mouth and is a steal at a penny under £10.



GREAT WITH...

Drink this with a starter of
panfried scallops cooked
with butter and sage.

VALDICHIANA TOSCANA BIANCA 2013, LOGGE VASARI

From Quality Italian deli's
Typical price **£8.99**

Italia! is lucky enough to be based closed to a really good Italian deli and we picked up this bottle of Tuscan white from there... It's an interesting wine from the Chiana valley with a green-to-yellow hue and plenty of white flower aromas on the nose. Medium-bodied it can take some time to build in flavour, so give it that time... The rewards are worth it. It retains its crispness though is rewarding in the finish, offering a long, fruity afternote.



GREAT WITH...

Try this one with slices of
cold cuts including parma
ham and roasted chicken.

VERNACCIA DI SAN GIMIGNANO 2014, TERUZZI & PUTHOD RONDOLINO

From Waitrose
www.waitrose.co.uk

Price **£9.99**

Vernaccia di San Gimignano is a love-it-or-loath-it wine. It's very dry, doesn't suit many food types and is seen by many as a 'table wine' rather than something of quality. This one defies all of those stereotypes. It has a fruity, lively character and satisfies both on the nose and in the mouth. Apple blossom, ripe pear and a touch of citrus (orange peel?) make for a wine that will keep you coming back for more. Definitely one to try.



GREAT WITH...

Try it with cracked crab
claws, or a whole dressed
crab if you're hungry.

**RONDOLINO
VERNACCIA DI SAN
GIMIGNANO 2014,
TERUZZI & PUTHOD**

From Waitrose
www.waitrose.com
Price £8.99

Crisp, dry and refreshing – as long as it's served nice and cold – this Vernaccia di San Gimignano is a high quality wine at a very good price (and deserves yet another doff of the cap from use to the wine buyers at Waitrose). It's quite subtle on the nose, with hints of grapefruit and lime, but it provides an abundant mouthful with a crisp, clean finish. Dry whites like this really do need to be served with fish, or enjoyed prior to a meal.

**'SOLOSOLE'
VERMENTINO 2014
BOLGHERI, POGGIO
AL TESORO**

From Liberty Wine Cellars
www.libertywines.com
Price £17.99

This is one seriously up-and-coming winery, based in the famed Bolgheri zone within Tuscany and owned by the Allegrini family. The wine is resplendent with tropical fruit flavours – apricot, melon and pineapple – though it retains a crisp freshness. Medium bodied, it's both youthful and refined, maintaining class and character. It screams out for a decent seafood platter, though would suit chicken and pork dishes also.

**'LITORALE'
VERMENTINO DI
MAREMMA DOC
2014, VAL DELLE
ROSE**

From Great Western Wine
www.greatwesternwine.co.uk
Price £11.99

This is an absolutely smashing wine, and one that you'll want to revisit time and again. The beauty of it is that has plenty of 'oomph' but it's in no way over-powering. Long, lingering notes of fresh herbs on the nose give way to ripe fruit flavours and a degree of zingy acidity that balances out the wine really quite nicely. Don't over-chill it. It's a wine that needs a little warmth to be savoured.

**GREAT WITH...**

Pasta dishes with a simple seafood, fish and cream sauce.

**GREAT WITH...**

A high quality white wine that deserves, say, lobster, or a dozen oysters.

**GREAT WITH...**

An odd one to match... We'd opt for escalopes of pink veal.

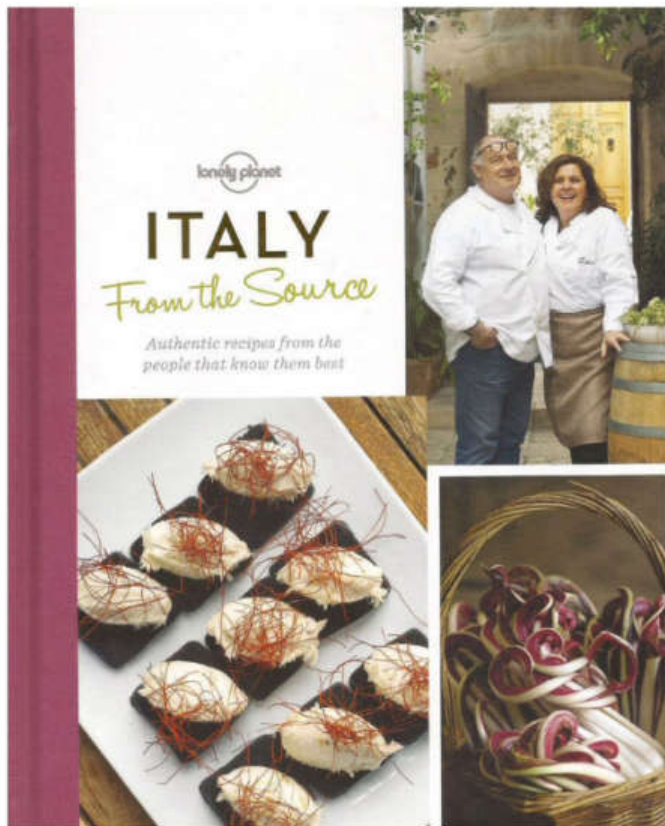
**A WINE FIT
FOR SAINTS**

Tuscany is one of the world's largest regions in terms of wine production, although relatively poor soil conditions mean that yield is quite low. Of course, the red wines dominate with Chianti, Chianti Classico, Chianti Rufino, Brunello di Montalcino and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano being the wines that we're most familiar with. But we should not forget Vin Santo – Holy Wine – as one of the most popular dessert wines, typically enjoyed with locally made *biscotti* – the biscuits being dipped into the wine as a post-dinner treat. As we've suggested in our introduction to this month's *Drink Italia!* the white wines from the region are catching up, though there is a fair way to go before they achieve global recognition.

*We should not forget
Vin Santo – Holy
Wine – as one of the
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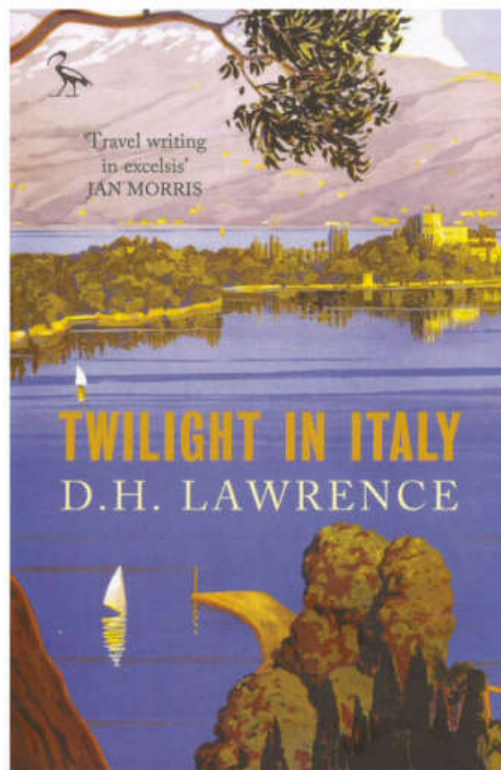
This month our book review section takes us through Italy's culinary heritage, we revisit a cultural classic and we embark on a journey to **Renaissance Florence** with a street urchin...



◀ ITALY FROM THE SOURCE

Sarah Barrell, *Lonely Planet*, £19.99 (hardback)

We have, of course, reviewed countless Italian cookery books over the course of the years, but few have pulled together a vast number of different chefs and their expertise to present a rich culinary tapestry that stretches from tip to toe and coast to coast of the country. *Italy From The Source* is subtitled: "Authentic recipes from the people that know them best." The photography and production values are every bit as delightful as the recipes included. And there are a lot of those... Dozens and dozens of Italian classics written by chefs and restaurant owners who value their traditional cooking methods and the quality of the ingredients locally available to them. As well as a simple-to-follow step-by-step format, each recipe is augmented by a detailed account of how the dish came to be and what it means to the region from which it comes. A future classic.



▲ TWILIGHT IN ITALY

DH Lawrence, *Tauris Park Paperbacks*, £11.99 (paperback)

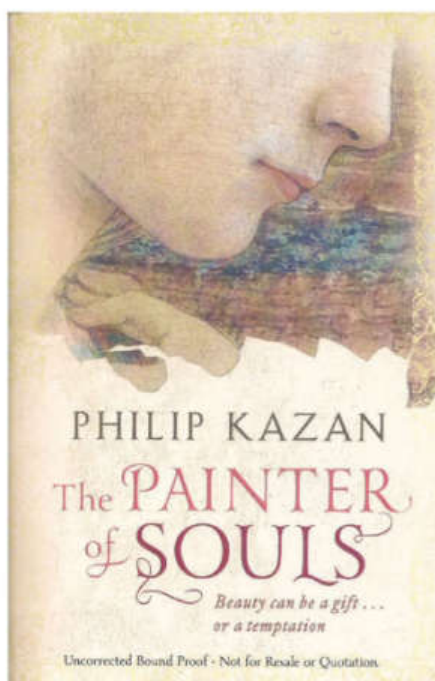
It's one of the classics in travel writing... *Twilight in Italy* was originally published in 1916, detailing Lawrence's journey from England to Lake Garda, where he spent more than a year witnessing and experiencing a country that was going through significant change. Both philosophical and brooding, it charts an Italy going through an industrial revolution and the run up to the First World War. This thought-provoking and contemplative piece has been reissued with a new introduction by renowned historian and author Jan Morris.

THE PAINTER ▶ OF SOULS

Philip Kazan,
Orion Books,

£13.99 (paperback),

Everyone loves a romp around Renaissance Florence, especially when escorted by a street urchin and budding rogue with an eye for art and an eye for the ladies. This novel details the life of Filippo Lippi, a young lad with many talents but a distinct lack of cash. And so he sees his destiny in the path of God, becoming a friar. Though his seduction of nuns would probably be frowned upon by the Lord Almighty...



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Loren won the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1962 for her role in Vittorio De Sica's *Two Women*, becoming the first ever to do so for a foreign language film.

#03

SOPHIA LOREN

If Italy had a female face it would be this one. Born Sofia Villani Scicolone in 1934, Sofia Loren is one of the most iconic of Italian actresses...

The film that rocketed Sophia Loren to international fame didn't make for easy viewing. *Two Women*, directed by Vittorio De Sica and released in 1961 was dark and gritty, detailing the life of a woman trying to protect and bring up her daughter in Italy during the Second World War. Loren was originally cast as the daughter but was determined to play the role of the mother instead. Featuring a scene of gang rape of both mother and daughter (in a church, of all places) Loren's performance was enough to win her the first ever Academy Award for Best Actress for a film in foreign language.

Loren herself hadn't had a particularly easy start to life. Born in 1934 in Rome, as Italy was shortly to be thrown into the middle of WW2 and heavily bombed. Sophia, who adopted the name Loren in 1952, was wounded by shrapnel during the bombings whilst running to an air raid shelter. She shortly fled to Naples, though returned to Pozzuoli with her grandmother when the war ended (her grandmother opened a pub in their house). Her acting career began in 1952 when she starred in *La Favorita*. Many films were to follow, though it will surely be that role in *Two Women* for which she will always be most fondly remembered. ■

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